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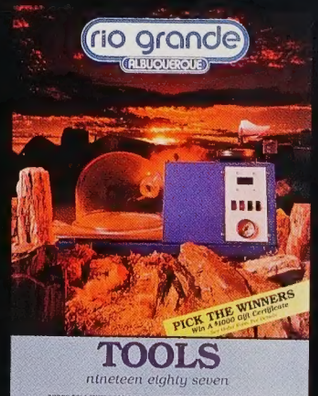

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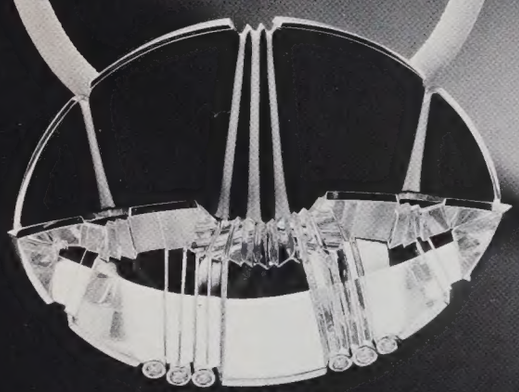

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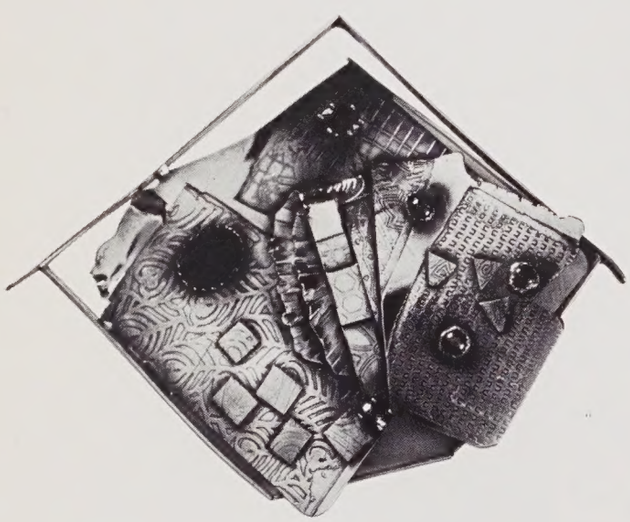

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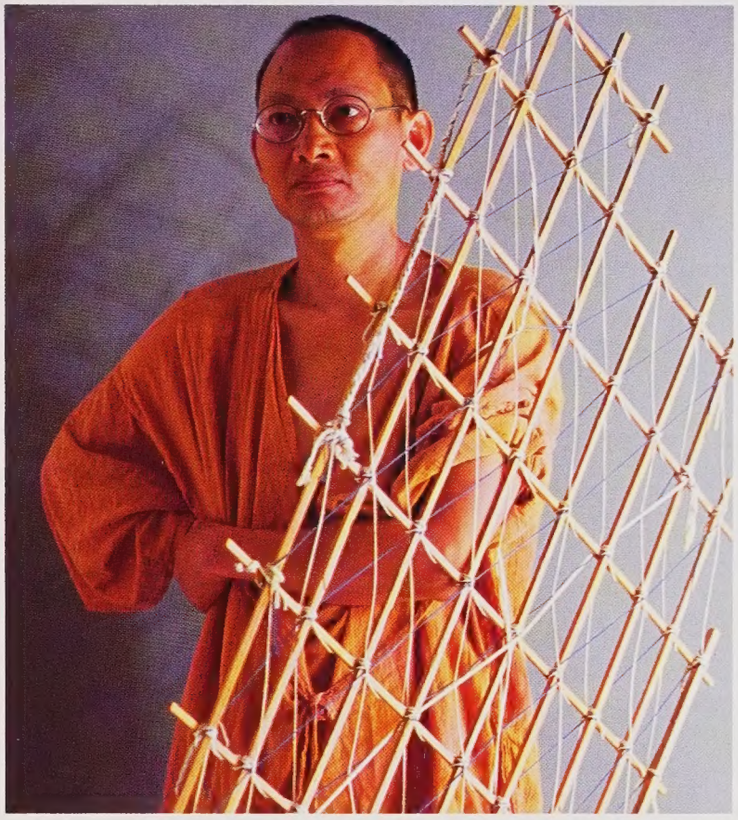

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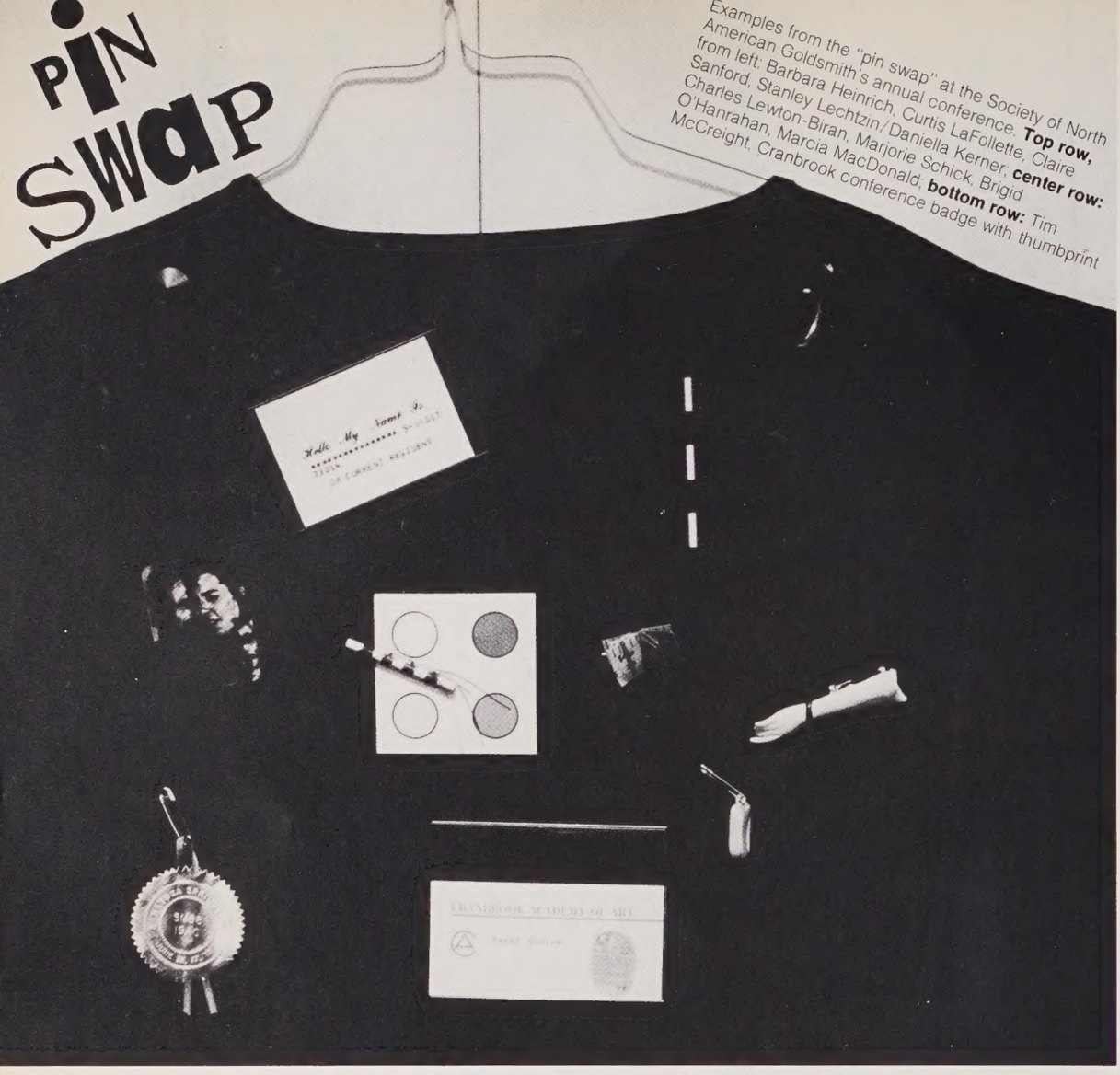
Cover: Gary Noffke, *18k Gold Goblet*, chased, seamless, 16cm h., 1970. Photo: Evon Streetman **above:** Kai Chan, *Cocktail Fence*, bamboo and string, 1985. Model: Kai Chan. Photo: Frans van Gerwen, see page 40 **right:** Gary Noffke, *Rings*, 18–20k gold, sterling silver, cast and fabricated, largest 1" h., 1969–78, see page 32

Pin Swap



Examples from the "pin swap" at the Society of North American Goldsmith's annual conference. **Top row,** from left: Barbara Heinrich, Curtis LaFollette, Claire Sanford, Stanley Lechtzin/Daniella Kerner; **center row:** Charles Lewton-Biran, Marjorie Schick, Brigid O'Hanrahan, Marcia MacDonald; **bottom row:** Tim McCreight, Cranbrook conference badge with thumbprint

Many a conference organizer will confess to anxiety over the "ice breaker," the initial challenge of getting people together, encouraging personal interaction and a climate of enthusiasm for the days ahead. Over the last two years, the Society of North American Goldsmith's national conference has unveiled an apparently successful appraoch to this challenge, notably the "pin swap."

Initially I anticipated that at a "pin swap" conferees would exchange unique pieces reflective of their own style and the state of their work at the time. Perhaps naively, I expected to see an Eleanor Moty cut-crystal brooch exchanged for a Richard Mawdsley banquet table, a Billie Jean Theide tectonic sterling and plastic brooch for one by Mark Baldridge in cast gold and titanium. And, in fact, some jewelers themselves perceived the event similarly. One person told me that she took such a piece to the first "swap," one that included gold and precious gems, and as a consequence was met with mild ridicule. She actually had trouble "swapping" it.

How did people instinctively know what a "pin swap" was all about? How did they know what to bring? There were personalized scrabble-letter pins, slide-frame pins, foam-formed cloud pins, personalized photographic pins, patinated "fish stick" pins, folded measuring-tape pins, electroformed organic ooze pins, anodized "hershey's kiss" pins and hand-holding plastic hotdog pins.

Pins made for the "swap" over the last two years embody the following general characteristics: their basis is an idea, not necessarily a material or technique, and this idea incorporates a personal statement, a humorous statement or a stylistic statement, often using alternative materials, which can be quickly fabricated at low cost. Ideally, a number of such pieces can be rapidly made in order to have enough to swap. The function is not that the work will be given away free but traded for something of equal value. The exchange value is perceived as "memento" of a fellow artist, a piece of owrk that bears the personality of the maker, made to capture the amiable spirit of the moment. This is the essence of the "pin swap." The audience for these pins is not some anonymous customer but fellow jewelers and metalsmiths, who understand all the problems of jewelry making as well as the time-consuming production processes. The idea is to be clever enough that other jewelers will appreciate the effort, and personal enough that the pin will be recognized, remembered and cherished.

So, what is being made here, perhaps inadvertently or unconsciously, is in fact jewelry, jewelry with an emphasis on concept. Recipients respond to this work and are affected in the same way any jewelry evokes responses—they covet it (I heard later that many people went home and made more of their "swap" piece to send to those who wanted them), wear it and find it precious. And this represents the essence of jewelry—its emotional and social implications and not necessarily how it was made and of what. The pieces made for the "pin swap" were just as creative, just as innovative, just as "valuable" as any other jewelry—art, fine or fashion.

—SB

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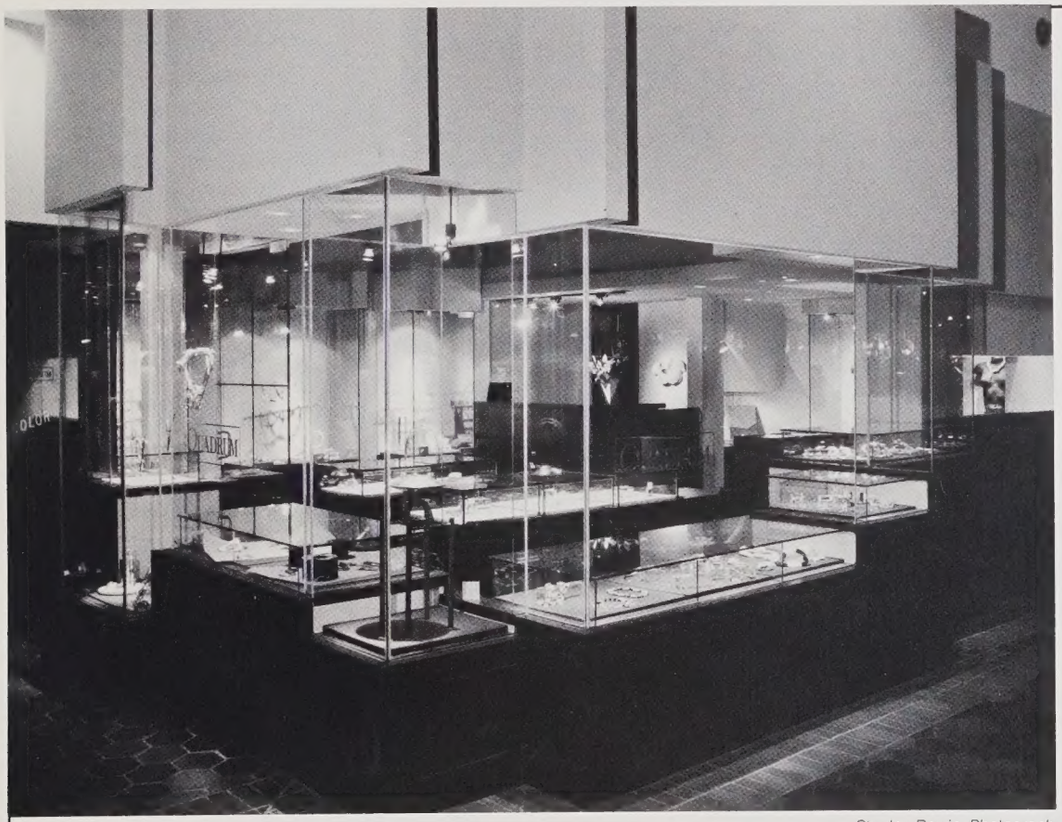

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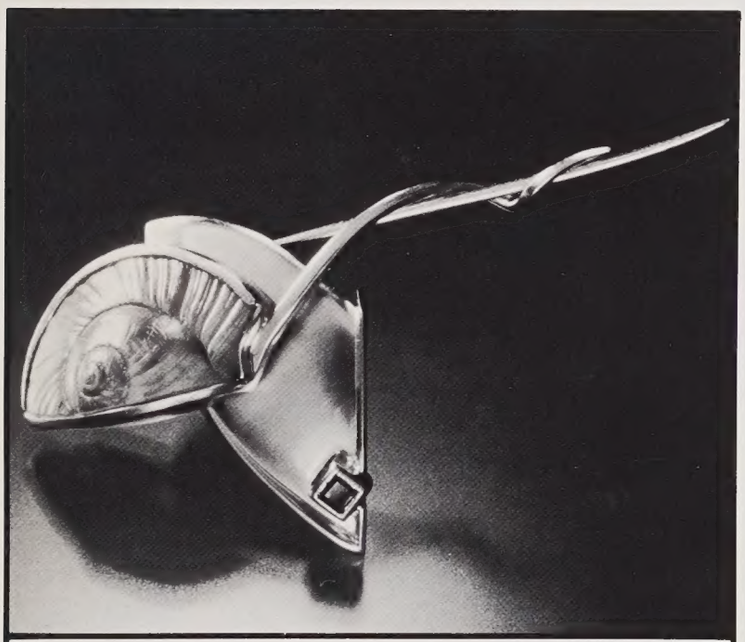

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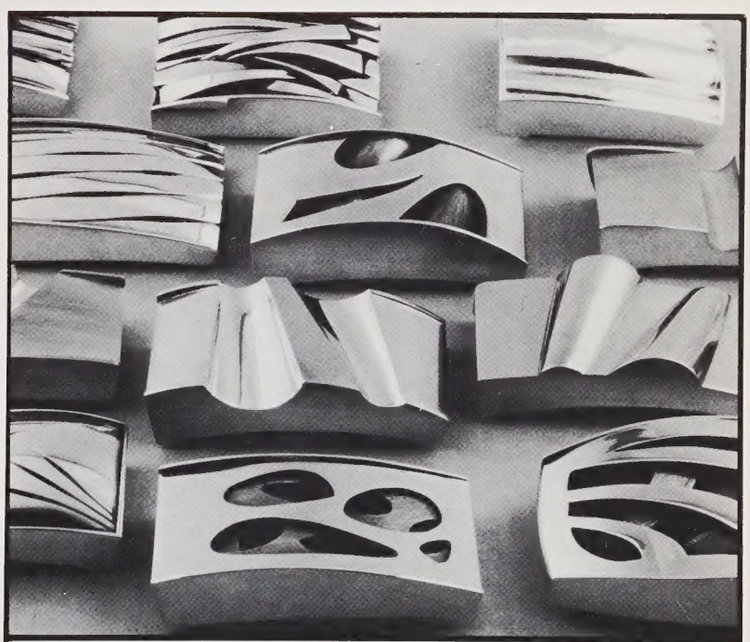

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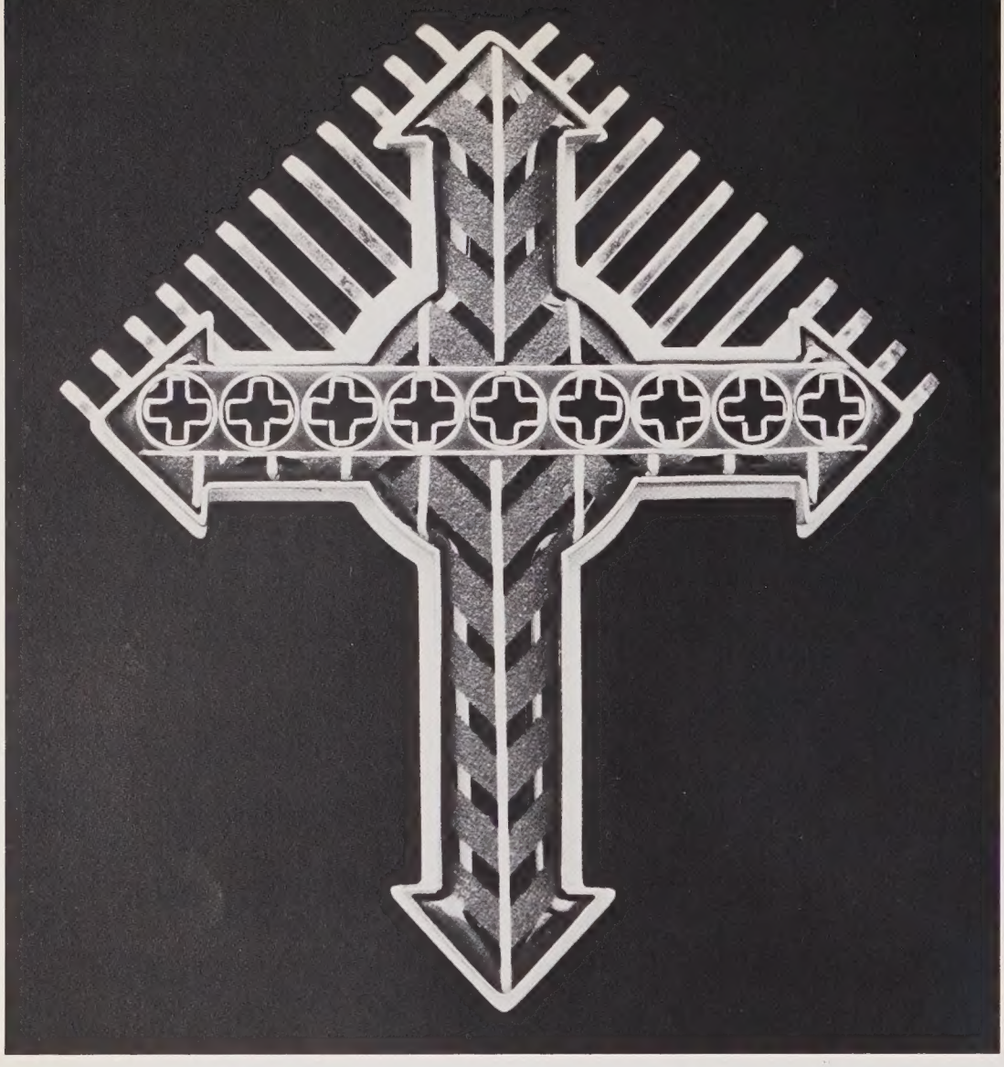

Fads and Fallacies

by A. Stiletto

In a recent interview, reported in *The New York Times*, the usually diffident Geoffrey Beene gently criticized "designers who create brightly colored, happily sexy clothes when so many people are dying of AIDS. That," he said "is why his fall collection was full of dark clothes and religious music." His comments came during a week of memorials at the Fashion Institute of Technology and Parsons School of Design for Antonio Lopez, the illustrator, and Willi Smith, the designer, both victims of the disease. When so many designers have been affected physically, emotionally and psychologically by this epidemic, it is regrettable that they have not shown a corresponding pathos in their work. Although notables like Calvin Klein have actively supported AIDS awareness, Geoffrey Beene's fall fashions are further poignant reminders that a designer's work is accountable to the full range of current emotions held by wearer and maker alike.

Another example of the "solemn beauty" that Beene new finds appropriate appears in the complementary work of Arthur Koby, who makes jewelry for Beene's fashion collections. As *The Times* reported: "For fall, Mr. Koby created jewelry that seems to have sprung from medieval times. Many of the oversize pieces have been blackened with either ancient patination techniques or the modern processes used to oxidize automobile hubcaps. Mr. Koby also creates jewelry from such unexpected materials as drawer hinges, Victorian shoe buckles, diamond-faceted stones made from melted down beer bottles, handcarved water buffalo horn and shredded or solidified balloons."

Arthur Koby's use of a "blackened" patina, unusual materials, medieval and Victorian images has origins in "mourning" jewelry. Such jewelry, worn in memory of a deceased person during periods of mourning, underwent stylistic changes from the impersonalized *memento mori* (literally, remember you must die) jewelry of the Middle Ages to the specifically commemorative pieces of the late 17th century onwards. Although brooches and pendants were worn in this manner, the most common form was the ring. Originally, in the Middle Ages, rings of the deceased were given to and worn by relatives and friends, but when these proved insufficient in number, the custom developed from the 15th century to the 17th of providing in a will that a number of identical and relatively inexpensive rings be made and given to mourners. During the Victorian era, after the death of Prince Albert, the commemorative ring made its appearance, made generally of jet (dense black coal) in somber styles. Although most of the known examples are in *memento mori* style, after 1770 a lock of hair, a portrait or an enameled mourning motif was set under a crystal in the bezel. Such rings were made in marquise shape and decorated with seed pearls, amethysts, diamonds or paste. In the early 19th century such rings were set with small gemstones, or black or violet enameling was added to a gem-set ring owned by the deceased.

Although the sentiment appears similar the intention seems to differ between the custom of mourning jewelry, which I feel is more aptly categorized as commemorative, and the current action of Geoffrey Beene, which is expressive. Simply stated, when personal in nature, mourning jewelry is worn to keep alive, for a limited time, the memory of a loved one; when public in nature, as in the case of Prince Albert rings, it is worn to preserve the memory of a figure whose image has social, cultural or political significance. In both cases, the deceased is commemorated.

Beene's somber mood, on the other hand, is not specific to the death of Willi Smith nor any other victim of AIDS, but rather acknowledges the undeniable effects that the spectre of AIDS has on his process of creation. Moreover, he is asking his audience whether they have the same sympathetic feelings when they dress. Can they deny that a specific mood or emotion takes over when they go out in public wearing their psychological profile on their sleeves? We accept the premise that we must have appropriate outfits for different social occasions yet dismiss psychological adornments that reflect our different states of mind. Fashion vacillates from season to season in response to the propriety of social mores, but doesn't the change in the emotional fabric of society affect these proprieties as well? We wear black in deference to the deceased or hang portraits of JFK or Martin Luther King to secure their memory, but we suppress the wearing of personal sentiment that is ultimately more appropriate to our psychological well being.

It is not the intention here to dwell on the macabre or advocate neo-*memento mori* but rather to encourage a liberation of jewelry and fashion in the expression of the full range of emotions by both wearer and maker. Although public sentiment towards AIDS most often surfaces during the mourning of its victims, we all share a sense of melancholy over this social condition.

Before the 17th century, it was believed that melancholy was a disease caused by the excess of black bile in the body, characterized by hysteria, distemper and paralysis. Thomas Aquinas pronounced it a sin because it interfered with human reason, and Dante reserved a place for the sad in hell alongside the angry. No wonder we are so timid, unwilling to explore this emotion, eventually cloaking it with euphemisms like depression, ennui, angst, neurosis and alienation. But those who acknowledge their melancholy share a bond—a consuming interest in their own emotions. For me, it is not only remedial but ultimately expressive to meditate on human frailities, on life's complexity, absurdity, brevity. At times this emotional absorption leaves the melancholic ill-prepared to act. The lesson is that however unique we feel ourselves to be, few of us live as intensely as our emotions would require. Although an extreme case is to be avoided, a little melancholy goes a long way toward thinking intelligently about life; it insulates us from the cultural demagogy often associated with fashion. Maybe we don't need a reinvestigation of mourning or commemorative jewelry, but a little melancholy could go a long way to liberating the private and emotional response in the wearing and making of jewelry.

Betsy Crump, *New Mexico Mourning Pin #9*, enamel, gold, 1⅝ x 1⅜". Photo: Sanford Mauldin (see review of Enamels '87 show in this issue, page 52)

A. Stiletto works in and around New York and writes a regular column on fashion.

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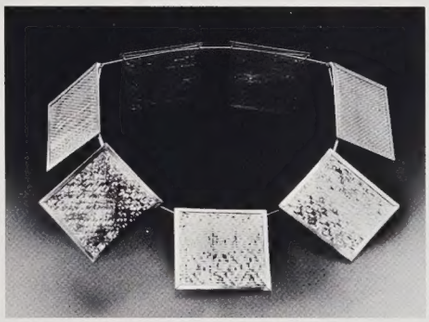

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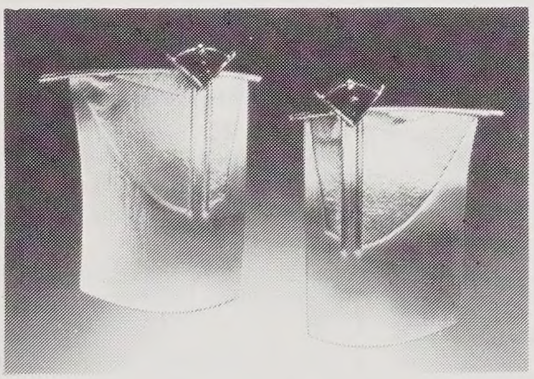

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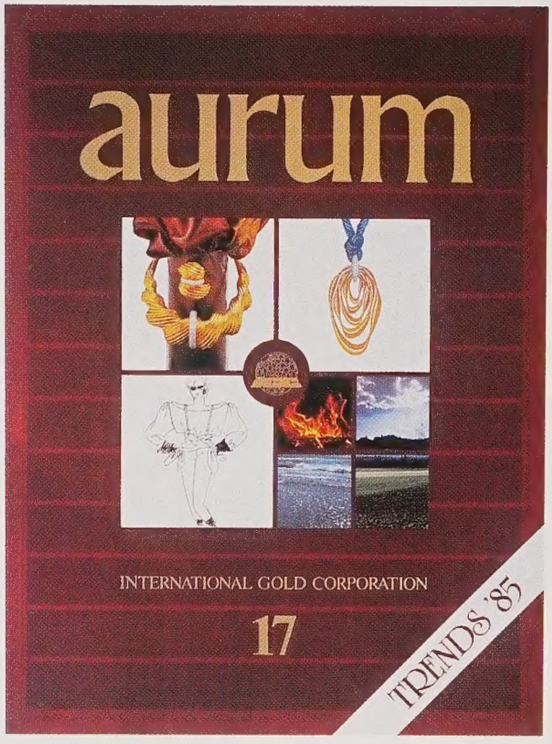

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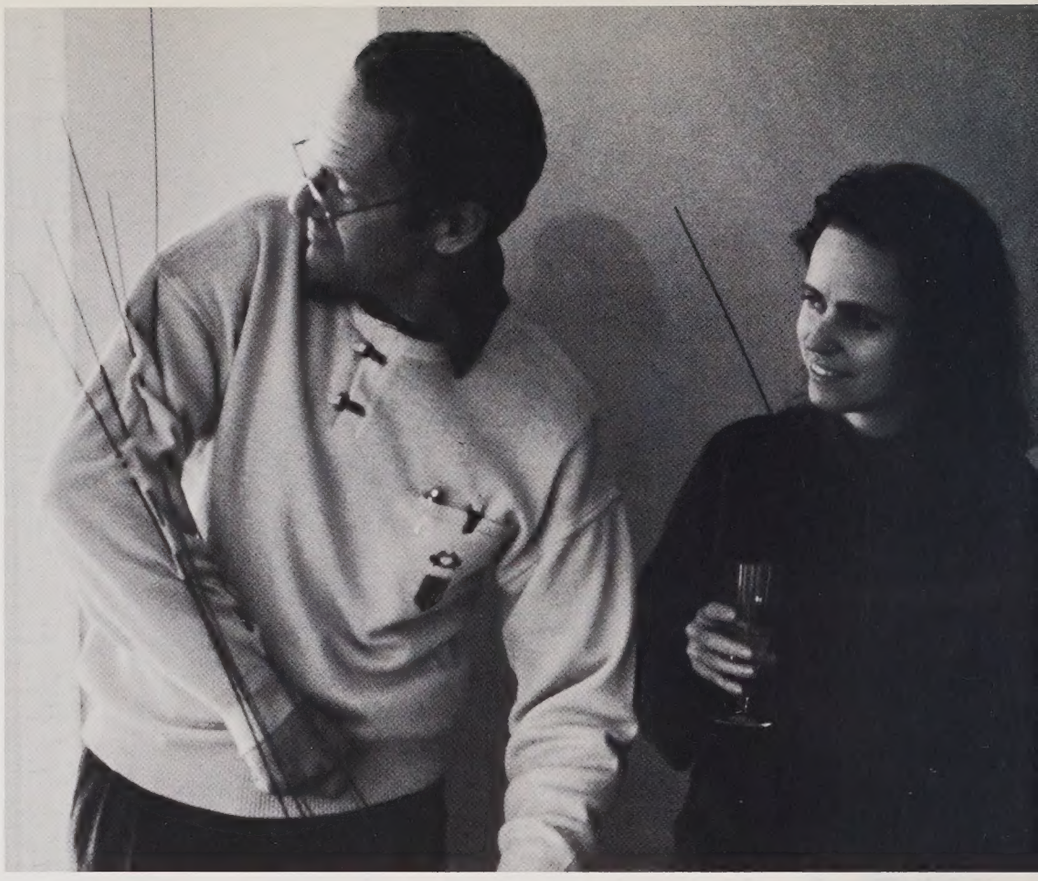
by Tim McCreight



Picture this: A room in a museum, unadorned white walls, no furniture. The only objects in the room are pieces of stainless steel rod varying in length from 12 to 18 inches. Each rod has been filed to a point on both its ends, and each has been painted black and red. They are leaning against the wall around the perimeter of the room. At an appointed time and for a span of four hours, selected guests are invited to enter the room and interact with the rods. A cameraman is there making a tape, another takes a few slides. When the time is up, the guests leave, laying their pins in a pile by the door. The show is over.

The name of this work is *brooching certain subjects,* and it took place in Oslo, Norway in March of 1985. It was conceived and created by James Evans.

I doubt if I'm the only metalsmith to squirm in his seat when the talk turns to performance pieces such as this one. Somehow they seem a bit too weird, a little too far out. I make excuses about being embarrassed to participate in something this social, but that's only a surface dodge. When I probe my anxieties further I find myself threatened by these new directions.

If this is where jewelry is heading, why did I spend all those years developing my technique? Isn't there an important tradition of workmanship, of physical control over a medium, that enlightens and enriches our work? When I think of performance work, there is an irritating tickle down deep in my brain that says, "This can't be real, it comes too easy. It's too glib." The antidote, I say to myself, is Technique, and I pick up my hammer and go back to my anvil.

And what has all this got to do with a column on technique? Everything, I think. Perhaps the root of my uneasiness, or at least my relief from this dilemma, lies in an evaluation of what is meant by that word.

Technique, we all know, is the stuff that goes on at the bench. The way I hold my pliers and my finesse with a sawframe, that's technique. Or is it? The dictionary defines the word as a "systematic procedure by which a task is accomplished." I notice it doesn't mention pliers.

With this in mind, I turn back to James Evans's work. Of immediate notice is the word play. To broach a subject is to approach it cautiously (picture the confused participants entering the gallery). A brooch with two "o"s is of course a pin, like the stainless rods. Subjects are the topics under discussion, or as a psychologist would use the term, the people being examined. Because these people were invited, they were not just any old subjects, but *certain* subjects. Far from being superficial, there is an obvious intelligence at work here.

In a statement accompanying the work, Evans addresses some of the issues raised in *brooching certain subjects.* These include an undermining of the traditional association of jewelry with precious materials, its usual display in glass cases and jewelry as heirloom (as an event, this is difficult to pass down in the family). He also dramatically raises questions about the social function of jewelry. By moving far beyond accessory and becoming the stimulus of interaction, he raises questions about why jewelry has been so confined for so many years.

And did all this happen by coincidence? Of course not. As with any other work of art, the end result is the effect of a complex train of invention, decision and action. The benchside technique was minimal, but the "systematic procedure" by which this result came into being represents skill, insight and wit. Technique, I can now see, is more than a list of manual skills. It is an attaitude that the artist brings to his or her world. Rather than becoming a wall behind which I must defend my traditional skills, it transforms into a bridge to expanded possibilities.

Guests interacting with James Evans's work *brooching certain subjects,* 1985

Tim McCreight is a working craftsman and a teacher at the Worcester Craft Center. He is a contributing editor to Metalsmith *and writes this column regularly.*

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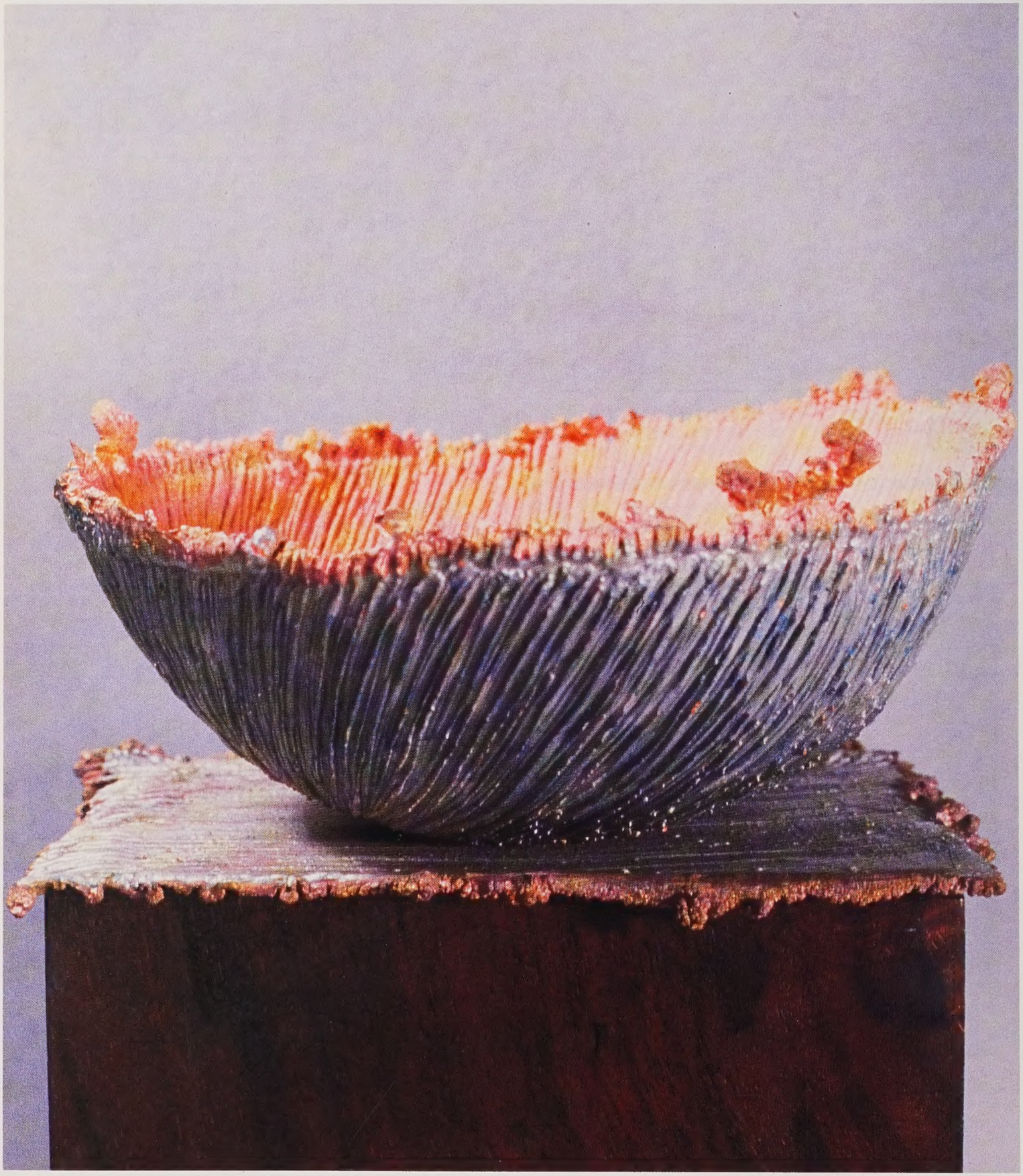


Probing the Potential of a New Esthetic

by Hazel Bray

Florence Resnikoff delights in the use of color. Vibrant and glowing, muted and moody, color for her involves extending beyond traditional metal and stone in washes of purple, rose, peacock blue, acid green and gold, or cloudings of blue gray—the expanded palette she achieves with anodized titanium, tantalum or niobium without losing the essence of their metallic character.

Resnikoff's sensitive use of color is an integral part of her work. It is as apparent today as a motivational force as when it led her into the arts as an avocation and provided an expressive balance to her professional work as a medical research technician. Color soon assumed greater import and fascination as she was introduced to enameling in classes at Chicago's Hull House. With only scant formal instruction, Resnikoff acquired new skills and mastered a self-taught repertory of basic jewelry techniques. She produced small pieces, often in silver with richly embellished surface color. Although she continued to work with enamel for several years, the transition from enamelist to jeweler was virtually inevitable as she became more absorbed in working the metal itself.

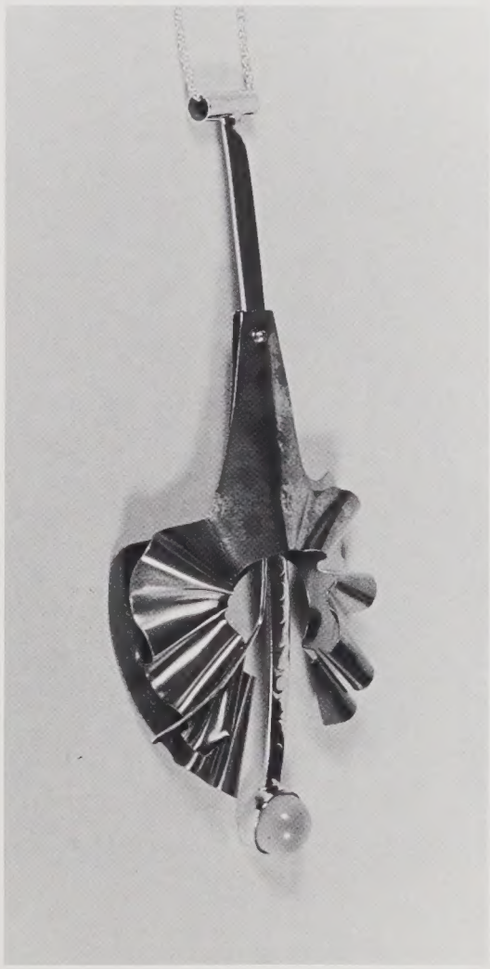
Echoes of her recurrent search for color are found in some of the densely patinated cost silver, gold or alloyed pins of the 50s, and color retains its importance with the introduction of dyed, cast resins into her work of the 60s. In a less obvious manner, it may be found in the nuances of color and value differentiations that she gained by combining various cast, plated or electroformed metals with sheet and wire.

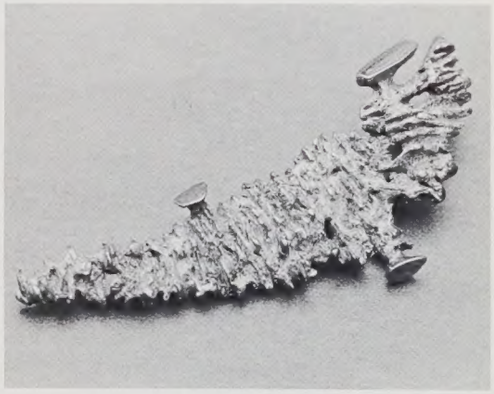
Although there have been periods when color was subordinated to tonal values and structure, the accomplishments of her recent work return it to a central position. It is now richer and more varied, as the optical qualities perceived in undulating, textured and patterned surfaces offer intensified or softened effects. This is well realized by the enriched color of the neckpieces in the *Ribbon Wrap series* as well as in three pendants, *Landscapes,* which exude a transcendent painterly quality. To consider color alone, however, would be an injustice to Resnikoff's design and structural vision.

The crucial years of her passage from avocational to professional commitment began in about 1951 with a move to the San Francisco Bay Area. A comprehensive, though informal education began as she was guided substantially by interaction with members of the Metal Arts Guild. This fellowship among metal artists was a stimulating experience, as it brought an end to the isolation in which most of her previous growth had occurred. Guild discussions often featured the thinking of one of its founders Margaret De Patta, whose remarkable presence exerted a salient influence upon Resnikoff through the interpretation of Bauhaus sensibilities and Constructivist thought. Although this relationship was not bonded by the close association of teacher and student, De Patta's largely self-taught experiences and attitudes evoked an emphathetic response from the younger artist. It was De Patta's emphasis on structural conceptualizations and the systematic probing of materials that most affected Resnikoff. During this time she briefly studied casting from wax models with Bob Winston, who introduced the use of a centrifuge into studio practice in this region, and who also provided a less structured approach to form and design.

Resnikoff's temporary stay on the West Coast ended with a return to Chicago for the year 1963-64, as her husband continued his academic career. The final relocation to California occurred in about 1965. Family obligations and career needs conflicted with her artwork, but a judicious budgeting of time was by no means unique to her experience. In fact, the moves between Chicago and the San Francisco area served Resnikoff well. She became a member, and later an officer, of the Midwest Designer Craftsmen. She maintained contacts with craftworkers in both regions, which established a pattern of involvement and leadership in craft organizations that would continue for many years on the West Coast. In this era of the craft movement, the group experience often provided direction and definition to individuals of disparate backgrounds and esthetic attitudes as they sought recognition for their professions within the arts. The liaison between independent craftworkers and those affiliated with colleges and universities was beneficial in many ways, not least of which was in creating a broader and more select exhibition forum for their work.

Relying primarily upon construction and casting, Resnikoff's earlier designs derived much of their character from the process





Opposite page: *Vortex Series #4* bowl, electroformed copper, silvered platform, 2¾ x 5 x 4", 1987; **left:** Set of engagement and wedding rings, gold, emerald, cast, 1956; **above:** *Ribbon Dot #5 Series* pendant, anodized niobium, 14k gold, moonstone, 4¾ x 2¼", 1983; **right:** *Pin,* alloy of beryllium, copper, silver, cast, 4 x 3½", 1964. Photos. George Resnikoff

and the palpable qualities of the metal. Although well defined, her designs often rejected the Spartan clarity of form that characterized so much of modernist thought, by her tendency to enrich surfaces with ornamental detail. Throughout the 50s and 60s, her cast pieces were generally executed with considerable restraint, as she avoided the beguiling excesses that often seemed to be inherent in the technique. The form of her rings and ring sets was fluid in transition, and many of them also gave a connotation of draped or folded fabric to the metal that relates to the character of the ribbonlike forms in her recent work.

However, exuberance was sometimes allowed more expression where casting was the dominant procedure. Even so, the castings were conceived as contained masses, often of penetrated volume with textural contrast gained by richly patinated and polished surfaces. A cast pin of 1964 is among the most expressive and organic reaches of her work at this time. The attitude is one of arrested agitation in a form that is suggestive of nature's seemingly random and sometimes harsh sense of beauty.

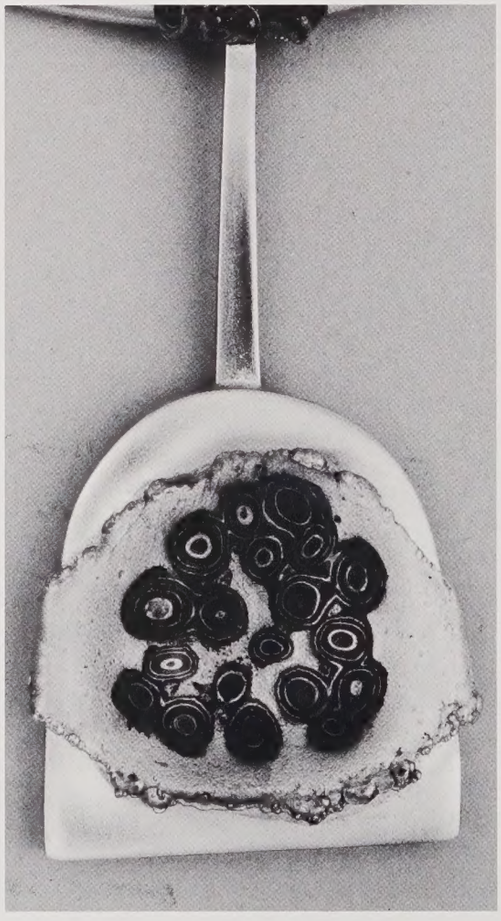
Other earlier methods combined lamination with casting as exemplified by a silver pin of 1962, where a detailed linear form was separated to create an expanded volume at each end, offering an enigmatic sense of organic growth. There is a duality of focus here that appears in other examples of her work, while the strength of its structure can be felt beneath the surface. Visual interest is also gained from the pattern of its cast shadow. Here the surface may predict the future use of the dot as it is combined with variant circular forms.

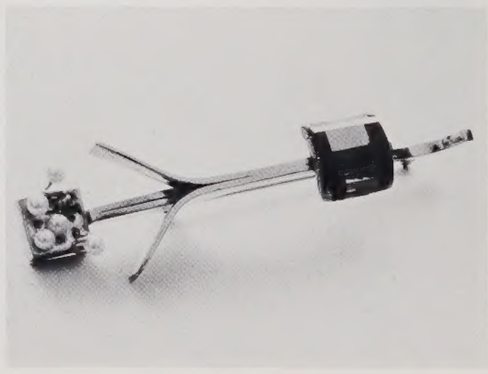
Among other available examples of her work predating the 70s is a vermeil pin of 1963. Constructed with laminated wire, its strong linear shaft presents two opposing axes. It contains a lens cut, blue spinel, which provides multiple aspects of the metal shaft, as the electrotextured bezel enriches detail and textural contrast. Tension is created through a shift of focus to the structure's diagonal thrust. Tension is augmented by yet another strong contrasting element, a cubic volume of metal that is placed upon the same axis as the stone, pierced and contoured to contain a nest of movable, curved wires with pearl finials. This complex piece is particularly interesting on several accounts. It acknowledges Margaret De Patta's exploration of the inherent optical qualities of transparent stones. Resnikoff's re-examination chose to emphasize the multiple visual qualities of the stone by developing a relationship between its transparency and the contrasting opacity of metal. In doing this, Resnikoff lessened the stone's impact, but also stressed the ability of both elements to embody aspects of fixed and moving form. The pin was reworked in 1968 with the addition of electrotexturing to the bezel. No other examples of Resnikoff's jewelry so clearly resulted from the study of several areas of De Patta's interests. It is essentially a tribute to her as well as a point of departure.

By the mid-60s Resnikoff was an established jeweler who was also exploring metalsmithing on a larger scale as well as bronze sculpture. Her jewelry was marketed in craft galleries and shops, and she also executed individual commissions. Her work appeared in several national shows and in numerous juried and invitational exhibitions on the West Coast and in the Midwest. It was also finding its way into public collections. However, these years also marked a turning point in her career that may have been brought into focus by her return to California where many of the significant changes in attitude within the crafts had occurred. These changes had not only swept through the crafts but struck down many traditional determinants and opened the entire field to new scrutiny and evaluation.

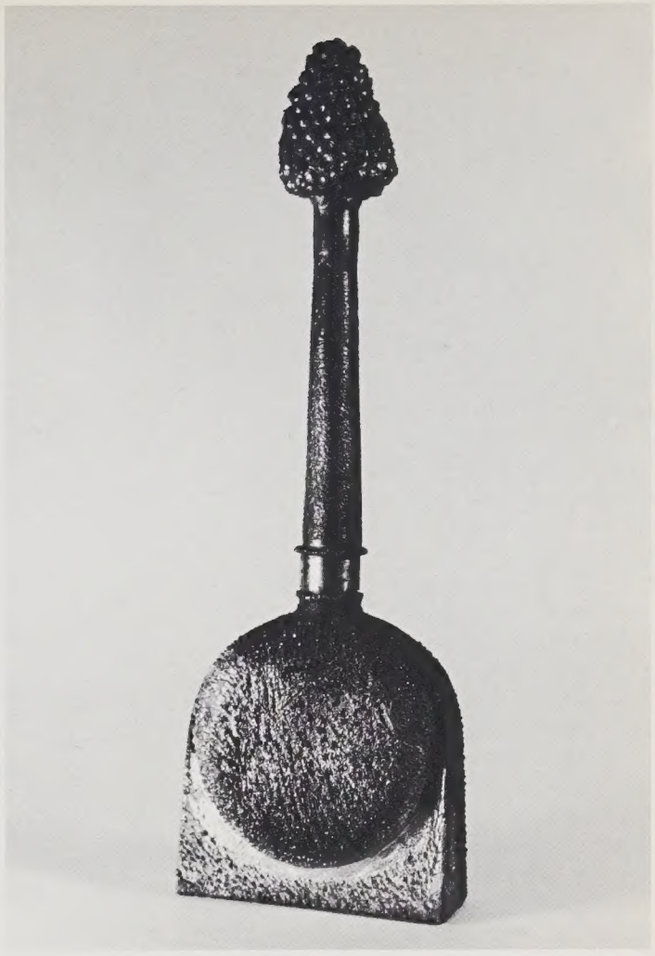
The stimulus was also internalized in 1962, when she had been greatly encouraged by receiving a prestigious exhibition award for a cast bronze sculpture. Resnikoff felt that she needed to explore her options, and that formal training, which had not been possible at the beginning of her career, would help her establish new directions and strengthen her work. She later described her feelings of dissatisfaction and expectation in this manner: "I found myself becoming anxious to break out of the precious metals, precious stones format. I wanted to become more of a metalsmith, to develop a personal image, to become part of a new wave which was open to the artist."

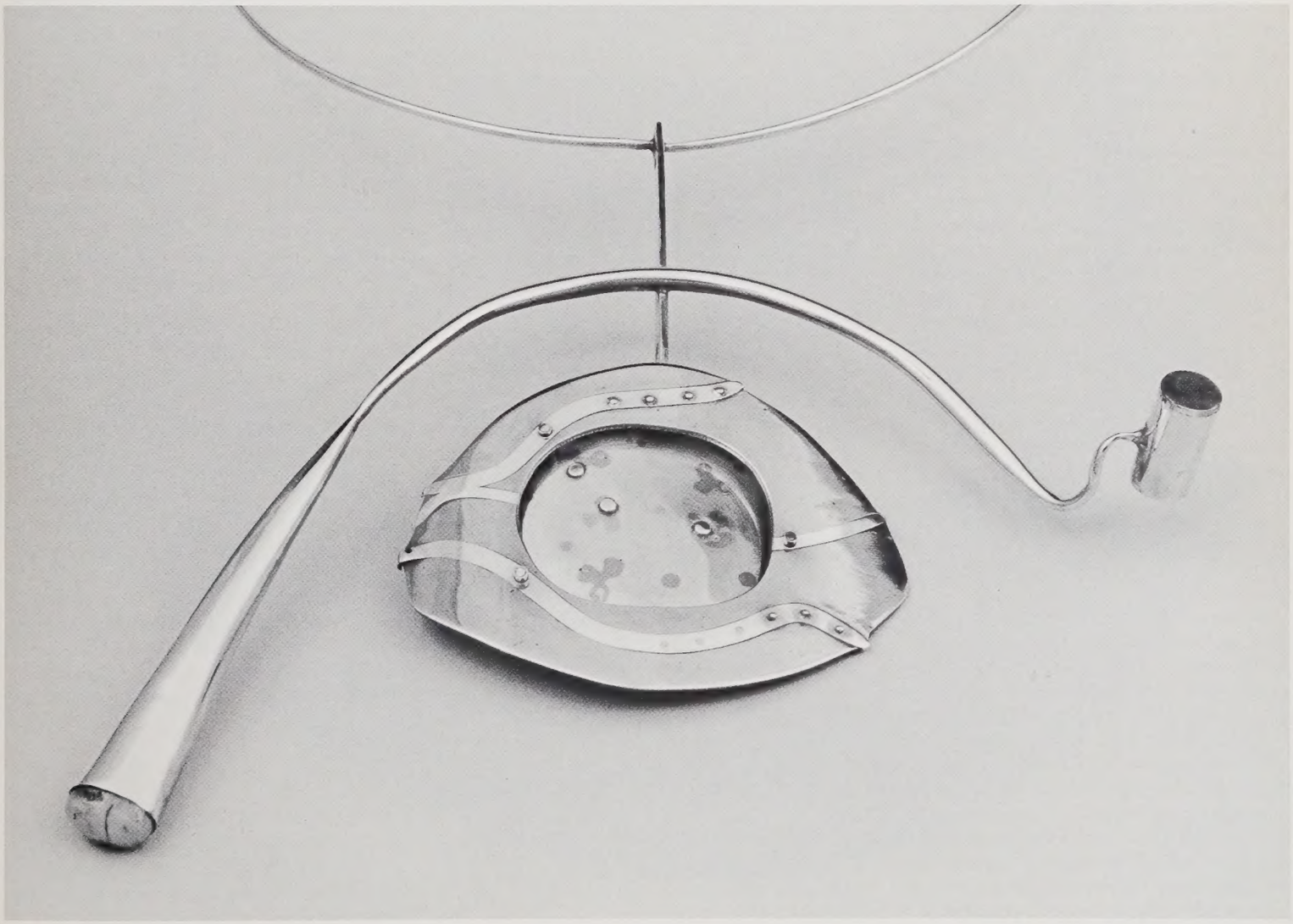
Although it appears that she was overly critical of the individual characteristics that were apparent in her work, she now became a re-entry student in sculpture at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. Resnikoff's time for studio work was soon





Left: *Pin, sterling silver, laminated layers, 3½ x 1¼",* 1962. Photo: George Resnikoff: **above:** Detail of pendant—see above left, opposite page; **right:** *Pin,* vermeil, blue spinel, movable pearls, 3 x 1", 1963. Photo: Gary Sinick; **opposite page, above left:** *Pendant,* fine and sterling silver, copper, moonstone, fabricated, spicule, electro-mokume, 6½ x 10", 1979; **above right:** *Strawberry Fields,* electroformed copper container, rose patina, 10 x 5 x 1¾", 1982. Photo: George Resnikoff; **right:** *Neckpiece,* sterling silver, gold, bronze and copper inlays, turquoise, mokume-gane, 6 x 9", 1978. Photo: Oakland Museum



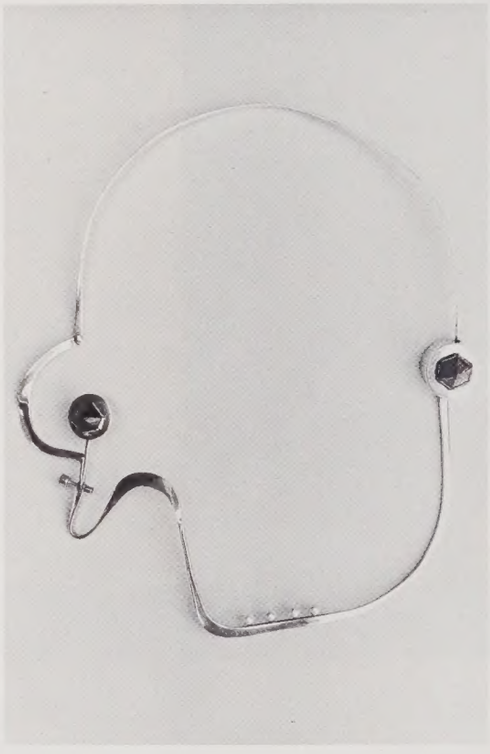


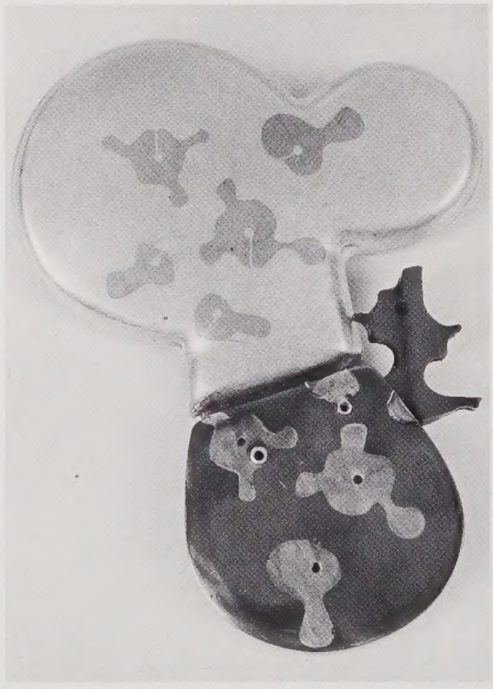
shared with graduate studies in art at California State University, San Jose, which she completed in 1973. This year also marked the receipt of a crafts fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts to study electroforming techniques and their application to jewelry and metalsmithing. To further her understanding of this process, she entered a graduate workshop conducted by Stanley Lechtzin at the Tyler School of Art that summer. She then set up her studio to probe its potential with the related processes of electrotexturing, which she had used earlier, and electroplating.

The jewelry that followed in the 70s represents a period of great energy, exploration and assimilation, as she established the foundations of her current work. Stones disappeared for a time, as metal gained even greater importance. Combinations of metals included bronze, the metal of choice in most of her sculpture and containers. Bronze with silver, silver with copper, and chrome plating over silver with copper, all indicated a quest for color that was achieved mainly without stones, or with dyed plastic elements. In some instances contrast was obtained by a confrontation between a graceful, refined form and one of seemingly artless, awkward immediacy.

As Resnikoff turned her attention toward the unification of dissimilar structural forms, many of the old design dictates of order, balance, harmony, for example, were replaced by eccentric focus and sudden juxtaposition. Not all the work of this time was charged with this level of energy. A respite is felt in a *Marine Series* of 1972, as Resnikoff stepped back into traditional subject matter with forms that were extracted from nature and retold in a more rhythmic, but less gentle spirit. Out of this striking melange of risky and demanding forms there emerged two modes —one tense, dynamic and expressive, and the other, static and measured in its post modernist sensibility. It is in this latter vein that some of the forms begin to explore industrial construction methods.

When mokume gane was brought to the attention of this country's metalworkers in the 70s, Resnikoff felt challenged to master its technique. At first she achieved the "wood texture metal" effect by the traditional Japanese method, but soon concluded that bonding the thin layers of different metals by plating, would replace the tedious process of soldering. Its finely detailed, repetitive imagery of circular form and curvilinear pattern evoked an immediate response from Resnikoff, as it related closely to an important aspect of her surface design. A pendant of 1979 contains a featured segment of contoured electro-mokume that has been embedded upon an abruptly terminated, elongated oval platform by electroforming, which she also uses to achieve volume and finish to its curving, irregular contours. A copper tube with a raised meander compliments the mokume, and the wire collar introduces a gently swelling curved segment between the moonstone and the related volume of a tubular form to emphasize the asymmetry of its dominant character.





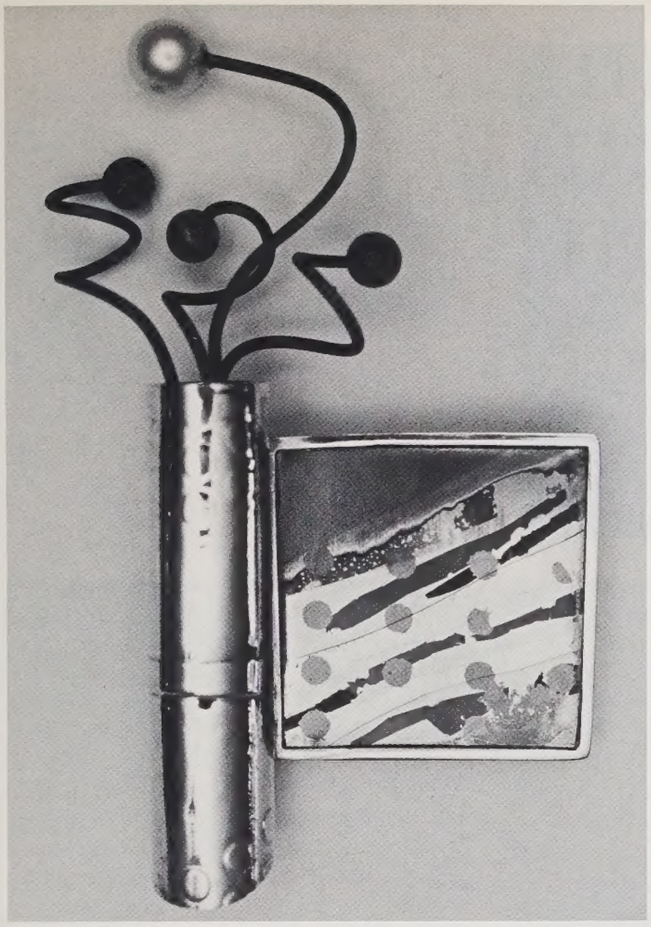
Top: *Necklet,* forged sterling silver, fabricated, amethyst prism, gold prism, pearls, 7½ x 10", 1976. Photo: George Resnikoff; **above:** *Genes Pin,* transposed inlay of silver, bronze, malachite, 3 x 2", 1981. Photo: George Post; **opposite page, top left:** *Multi-Dot Pin,* anodized tantalum, sterling silver gilt, sodalite balls, cultured pearl, 6 x 2½", 1982. Photo: George Resnikoff; **top right:** *Square Pin-Pendant,* anodized niobium, sterling silver, jade pillow, 1¾ x 2¾", 1986; **right:** *Ribbon Loop Neckpiece #2,* anodized niobium, titanium, sterling, gilt, rutile quartz, stainless steel, nylon band, 10 x 10", 1986. Photo: Gary Sinick

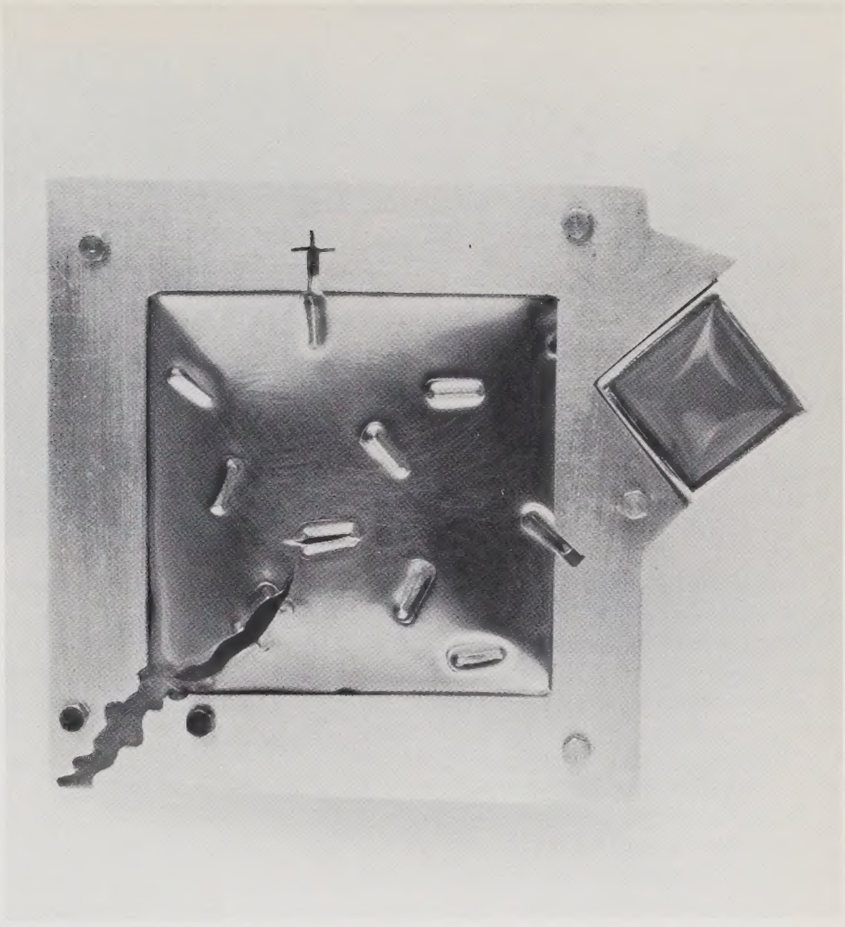
Resnikoff taught for several years in the State University system and joined the faculty of the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1975, where she is presently head of the Metal Arts program. The latest major exploration of techniques and metal forming methods occurred at the end of the decade when Peter Haufee spoke on his work before her students. Its striking color led Resnikoff into the research and study of anodizing highly refractory metals. Also, the transfer of this new technology, which brought a new dimension of color and material that had not existed previously in the artist's arena, was a development she could support wholeheartedly.

Florence Resnikoff finds little that is appealing about nostalgia or consciously drawing inspiration from the past. She has placed her work firmly in the present throughout the more than 40 years that she has been a jeweler and sculptor. Working within the context of one's own culture is a deeply rooted tenet and one that is central to her art.

She also believes that we can be informed by and enjoy the contributions of other cultures without borrowing irrelevant symbols, and that we can learn from them and our own cultural past without having to romanticize their methodologies. It is not surprising, then, to find in her studio machinery that replaces some traditional hand procedures, nor is the equipment to work with highly refractory metals a negation of her identity as an artist and creator of unique objects. That her recent work incorporates the so called "high-tech" materials is not incidental, but the result of several years of study and an ongoing probe, ". . . of their potential to be moved beyond the technical into a new esthetic."

Hazel Bray is a retired curator of decorative arts from The Oakland Museum.





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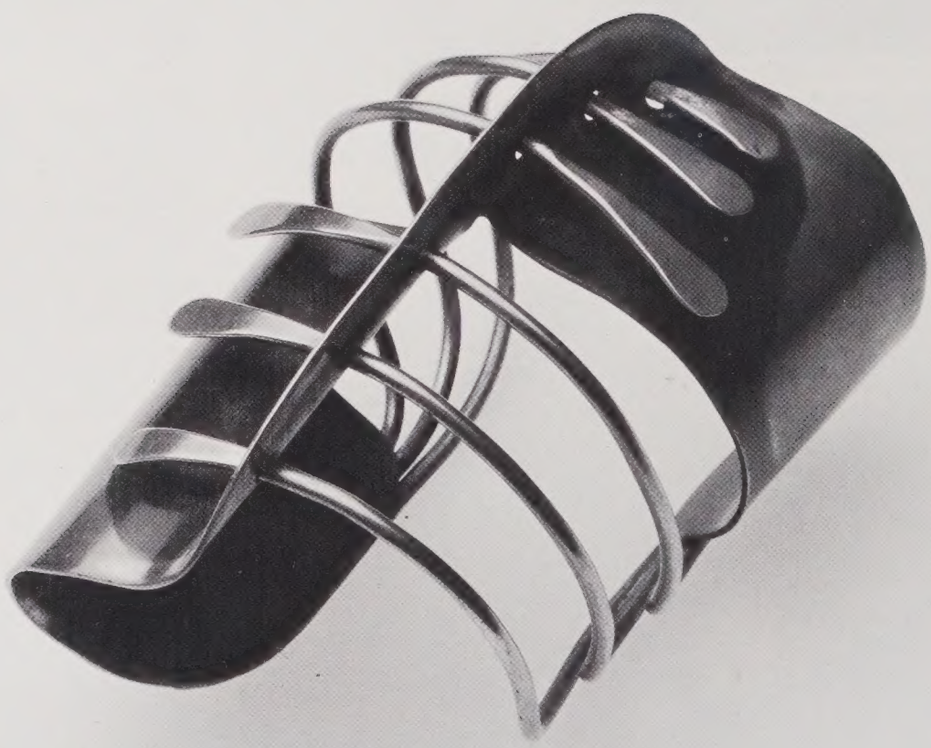


by Toni Lesser Wolf

In a promotional flyer from the early 1950s, Art Smith offered a "fanciful ring of space, silver and gold." The main ingredients in his work, from about 1946 until his death in 1982 at the age of 65, were sheet, wire and "space . . . which I use very accurately, very concretely . . . somewhat because of my orientation towards designing that way but also as a very cheap component. . . . You can find it and make it tangible."[1] The emphasis on space and its implication of human structure is essential to be understanding of Smith's design. "A piece of jewelry," he said, "is a 'what is it?' until you relate it to the body. . . . Like line, form and color, the body is a material to work with. It is one of the basic inspirations in creating form." The question is "not how do bracelets go, but what can be done with an arm?"[2]

Smith had graduated from Cooper Union in 1945, where he was exposed to three-dimensional objects (sculpture and constructions) for the first time. Having been encouraged by a dean to major in architecture because he could easily find a job in the nondiscriminatory civil service, he rejected this proposition because he didn't want to abandon the other artistic discipline. Although he had an instinct for the design of exciting structural form, mathematics escaped him. Ever-present was the conflict of whether to give in to the niche provided for the Black man in mid-century American society or to make a place for himself in the New York art world.

Constructions interested Smith more than painting. He wanted to "create something that was tangible, not just illusion."[3] Entertaining and then abandoning thoughts of going into advertising, he took a part-time job as Crafts Supervisor at the Children's Aid Society in Harlem, where he would design prefabricated objects for the children to assemble. However, attendance was poor and the trustees of the organization were reluctant to explore ways of making the program truly effective. After four years, he quit. But while there he had met another teacher, a black woman named Winifred Mason, who was to be instrumental in his career. Mason was a jeweler and after seeing her work, Smith became very excited about the possibilities for creative expression through jewelry. When she offered him a job in the shop that she was to open on Third Street in Greenwich Village, he jumped at the opportunity.

In the Village he met other artists and metalsmiths who were to influence and encourage him. Always a great lover of jazz, Smith would go with painter Charles Sebree and choreographer Talley Beatty to hear Billie Holliday sing in a club around the corner from the Third Street shop. Ralph Ellison, Gordon parks and countless other writers and intellectuals, both Black and White, were customers and friends. A mecca for both craftsman and consumer alike, Greenwich Village was already home to several other innovative metalsmiths: Paul Lobel, Sam Kramer, Arthur King and the Rebajes brothers. Lobel, actually, offered Smith a job when he eventually became disenchanted with Mason. Although he admired Lobel a great deal, he decided it was time to strike out on his own.

Upon leaving Winnie Mason, Smith opened a tiny shop on Cornelia Street, in Little Italy, where he remained for four difficult years, subjected to both racial prejudice because he was a Black man and social antipathy because he was an artist. His shop windows were broken, apprentices heckled when they came to work and his very life was threatened in a hit-and-run attempt. The Civil Rights Congress came to his aid after his plight was publicized in *The New York Times*, resulting in his store receiving police protection. But the time was right to move back to the artists' colony in the Village. With financial backing from Craftsmen's Equity, an organization dedicated to maintaining high standards in the craft field (of which he was president), he turned his energies to a new, and what was to become, permanent space at 140 West 4th Street.

Opposite page: *Hand Piano* cuff, copper, brass, forged and constructed, c. 1948. Collection: Fifty/50, NYC. Photo: Amos Chan, 1985. (Note: Titles are by the author for identification only.) **Above:** Art Smith. Photo: Ralph E. Morgan

By this time his reputation had spread, due mostly to his inclusion in the second national exhibition of contemporary jewelry, held in 1948 in the Everyday Art Gallery at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The purpose of the Everyday Art Gallery was to promote good design in ordinary objects. This exhibition included 282 pieces of jewelry by 30 craftsmen. The Spring 1948 issue of the Walker Art Center's publication, *Everyday Art Quarterly* (later renamed *Design Quarterly*) lamented the fact that although innovative design and new materials had entered the realm of other common objects, such as dwellings, furniture, pottery, fabrics and clothing, jewelry had remained tediously the same. "In jewelry . . . hardly a change is noticeable. A search of jewelry stores reveals only the same stars, clusters, rosettes, floral motifs, and other traditional shapes that have been used for centuries."[4] "Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars," as this exhibition was entitled, traveled around the country for two years, thereby stimulating widespread interest in contemporary handcrafted jewelry.

History had been made two years earlier, however, when the landmark exhibition, "Modern Jewelry Design 1946-47," at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, created a watershed in the appreciation of modern jewelry. This exhibition displayed the work of 26 makers (seven of whom were artists working primarily in another medium) "whose designs showed that the artist had considered the characteristics of the materials used and made us aware of their intrinsic beauty in contemporary terms."[5]

Paul Lobel, one of the jewelers represented in The Museum of Modern Art exhibition, whose shop was a few stores away from Smith (at 130 West 4th Street) and whom Smith admittedly admired as previously mentioned, exerted a strong stylistic influence on him. In Lobel's work, Smith saw formal freedom.

American studio jewelry design, in its seminal stages (c. 1936) had continued the trend of antihistoricism and rejection of traditional design conventions begun by Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement some 40 years earlier. A pioneering spirit

spurred craftsmen on in their exploration of dynamic form, asymmetry and ornamental approach to structure. Those principles coupled with a creative observation of the images seen in the modern art movements just preceding and contemporary with it,[6] led post-World War II studio jewelers to redefine jewelry.

Fundamental to this new approach was a respect for material. Form was no longer to be imposed on metal. The integrity of the material and the concurrent empirical exploration of its formal possibilities were to be primary avenues of investigation. Cheaper materials were used, such as brass, copper, nickel, chrome and stainless steel. Technique was subordinated to expression, which often produced a "primitive" result. Just as the tribal metalsmith learned the limits of his craft by trial and error, so did the modern studio jeweler. Just as the Western European metalsmithing tradition had conventionalized technique, the modern metalsmith rejected that principle, as such. This is not to say that he was purposefully sloppy, only that craftsmanship, per se, was irrelevant. And when one perceives a piece of jewelry made by Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, Sam Kramer, Ed Wiener, Paul Lobel or Art Smith, the expressive energy—the "hand" of the craftsman—is evident.

Biometric forms, as seen in the painting and sculpture of the Surrealists were appropriated and reinterpreted in the metal imagery of Art Smith. The huge silver cuff bracelet comprised of two undulating masses superimposed one upon the other, brings to mind the amorphous shapes used by Miró and Arp. The duet of forms seems to slither amoebalike around each other, attached securely at some points, while at others the upper mass strains to free itself. The whole projects the characteristics of some primeval entity. Imagining the bracelet on a wrist, the ends would curve away from the human element, negotiating its protoplasmic "escape." The areas where the silver is curved most deeply contain dramatic negative spaces—to be filled in by a forearm; air replaced by skin—always a strong element in Smith's design. "Things should really play with each other and they should play with the body. It should be fun, it should be an exploitation. It should be an investigation. A good piece of jewelry literally caresses the body and fondles it and as I say, plays with it . . . it enjoys itself and it enjoys you and you enjoy it.[11]

By drawing with wire in space, Smith created graceful neckpieces, intensely asymmetrical yet visually balanced. Tension was produced by an uninhibited linearity, perhaps arising from the unconscious mind as in the "automatic writing" of the Surrealists. Curves of silver encircle the neck and are then punctured by pendant spheres of rock crystal. In the "scribble" neckpiece, the closure is incorporated into the overall design by providing the necessary counterpoint to the hanging stone and echoing the linear element from which it hangs. A "question mark" grips the neck from which a clear quartz ball dangles, counterbalanced by a smaller stone at the top end.

Smith had a flair for the theatrical. He often designed for the dance companies of Talley Beatty, Pearl Primus and Claude Marchant.. There were always special challenges involved in such jewelry, as the pieces had to be large but light enough not to encumber the dancers. Very often costumes had to be changed frequently, so great care had to be accorded to the fasteners. The jewelry had to be worn under abnormal conditions—to withstand somersaults and the like. Additionally, the pieces had to fit into a narrative context like the costumes. However, frustrations notwithstanding, the moving body had always been the armature upon which Art Smith, most satisfactorily, hung his jewelry.

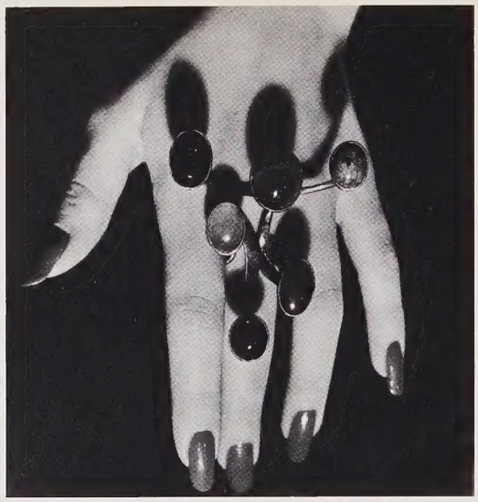
As mentioned earlier, when any maker approaches metal empirically, he allows the materials and tools to dictate form, and the result will be visual phenomena that the untrained eye might read as "primitive" in character. This is not to say that direct exploitation of metal's properties causes unsophisticated jewelry but jewelry that seems basic and primal upon first inspection. Closer scrutiny reveals, however, ingenious methods of connection and conscious technical display, as in the "loop" neckpiece. The whole consists of intertwined S-shape units, the bottom of each becoming a flattened open loop placed perpendicular to the body, and the top a row of parallel hammered tongues. Technique is used as an element of design in its proud display. Smith wants us to know how he forged this piece. The small flattened edges stand parallel to the neck, which they partially encircle, providing a counterpoise to the knife-edge loops sweeping across the chest.

Reminiscent of a *mbira* or African "hand piano" is a cuff bracelet made from copper sheet and brass wire. A single, round-edge copper rectangle was cut to within about ½″ of the edge; the two halves were splayed in opposite directions, then curved towards each other to enclose the wrist. Oxidation emphasizes the recesses on top of the bracelet. Brass wires, their ends flattened, pierce the copper and gently curve to complete the cuff. The overall effect is one of tribal strength. Allusions are made to the primitive, both in the simplicity of a direct technical approach and the humble materials used, as well as in the anthropological associations. Yet the juxtaposition of solid with vacuum and mass with line and suggestions of human skeletal structure leave the viewer with a very sophisticated product.

Never wanting to be identified with any particular style or technique, Smith explored fused forms and textural effects, as well as plain wire and sheet. He abhorred mannerisms and gimmicks and was, reportedly, thrilled when a friend commented that a piece "didn't look like him." His foray into fused metal was, however, restrained when one compares it to Sam Kramer or Ibram Lassaw and in many bracelets and earrings there is a staunch linearity. The earrings, especially, are figural in character, the end blobs representing appendages or joints, the whole making reference to bones.

Finger rings were an area that Smith researched completely. "What could I do in and around the finger, not just on the finger; what could I do in relation to a hand? . . . You have to call [these rings] hand decorations."[8] One of the most ingenious engineering feats was a three-part ring designed for a customer with arthritis. The three rings, connected by chains, add poignancy and dignity to distorted joints. The human struc-

Opposite page: *Bones* earrings and cuff, sterling silver, forged, fused and constructed, c. 1949; **top:** *Question Mark* neckpiece, sterling silver, quartz, forged, assembled, c. 1953. Private collection. Photo: Madeline Capp; **above:** *Loop* neckpiece, sterling silver, forged, c. 1950



Top: *Stones* ring, sterling silver, semiprecious stones, forged, constructed, c. 1970. Private collection. Photo: © Coreen Simpson, 1987; **above:** *3-Part* ring, sterling silver, forged, constructed, assembled, 1968. Private collection. Photo: © Coreen Simpson, 1987; **opposite:** *Biomorphic* bracelet, sterling silver, forged, constructed, approx. 5½" l., c. 1946. Private collection

ture fascinated him in its contorted as well as natural presence.

Smith wanted to create big, bold rings. Very often stones would travel up the hand or across three fingers. The effect he wanted to achieve was as if someone had dipped a sticky hand into a batch of stones and their random placement, when the hand emerged, formed the ring's configuration. Smith found calmness in stones; he chose them for the quiet energy they generated, for his emotional response to them. They were almost always semiprecious, often flawed or defective. He created "families" of stones in one piece. If he utilized precious stones it was usually for a commissioned work, which he did not enjoy as much as following his own muse, unless the stone or person was particularly exciting to him. Among his most noteworthy commissions was a brooch for Eleanor Roosevelt, presented to her by the Peekskill NAACP, and a pair of cufflinks for Duke Ellington, which incorporated the first five notes of "Mood Indigo."

In 1969 Smith was given a one-man show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now the American Craft Museum), and in 1970 was included in "Objects: U.S.A.," the Johnson Collection. He therefore enjoyed a certain amount of recognition while he was still alive. He was invited to lecture and exhibit his work at institutions around the country, such as Bennington College, Indiana University, Brookfield Craft Center, The Studio Museum in Harlem and the Staten Island Museum of Arts and Sciences. In addition, due to the traveling nature of several museum exhibitions in which he was represented throughout his career, his work became nationally known. Several regional galleries and department stores carried his jewelry, although he found it far more satisfying to sell solely through his own shop and to devote his time and energy to creating jewelry instead of to managing a business.

Never one to follow fashion's dictates, he did benefit from style because his jewelry was always designed for the body—very wearable, yet dramatic. When large earrings became popular, for example, he gained many new customers, who remained even when the trend was over. They were "hooked" to his jewels that made a new kind of personal statement, that depicted the wearer as adventurous and in touch with her body and its visual presence. In 1979, Smith developed heart trouble and because of ill health was forced to close his shop.

What struck me, in listening to several former customers discuss their patronage, in conjunction with the Hatch-Billops Collection's Art Smith project,[9] was the close friendship which often developed between them, how Smith would invite customers to the studio at the back of the shop to have a snack and a conversation with him while he worked. The radio was always on as he shared his other passion: music. He was a member of the Duke Ellington Society until his death, and, certainly, his jewelry can be viewed as a visualization of the rhythms, melodies, harmonies and balance of his beloved jazz. Mel Tapley, in Art Smith's obituary in the *Amsterdam News*, March 6, 1982, wrote, ". . . his . . . creations . . . had [the] elegance, creativity and distinction of an Ellington composition."

Arthur Smith was a man who grew up in a period in American history when achievement for a member of a minority group was an uphill battle. His father had been a militant in his own day, an officer in the Marcus Garvey movement and felt that he was "a maker of destiny."[10] Brought up by a loving and supportive mother, Smith felt, early on, that he was different from his peers in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. He liked school and had ambition, aspiring to more than a practical but demeaning job. "A good job for a Negro, in those days was an usher at the Paramount or a porter at A.S. Beck."[11] He always wanted to be an artist but didn't want to go to a Negro college. Although he wasn't philosophically a nihilist (militancy was suppressed in those days), he railed against social injustice and the concept of segregation. Without money for higher education, he applied for, and was awarded a scholarship to Cooper Union. There were six Black students in the entire school, and, because of the tenor of the times, they always felt as if they were second-rate. He always praised Cooper Union, however, as a school that encouraged innovative ideas and not simply mimicry of the past.

Arthur Smith was a self-taught metalsmith. His years with Winifred Mason gave him the technical skills necessary to practice his craft while his innate sense of how to combine form and space resulted in his art. Understanding of the body and the possibilities for its embellishment gave rise to his jewelry. There are few jewelers who have used the human silhouette so effectively in creating three-dimensional wearable forms as Art Smith. He drew inspiration from anatomy—bodily structure. He reflected it, took off on it, made allusions to it, added to it, went further than it, at times laughed at it, but consistently respected and applauded it.

Notes

1. Interview with Art Smith by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, August 24 and 31, 1971, at Art Smith's studio.
2. *Art Smith: Jewelry*, catalog of the exhibition at the Little Gallery of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NY, September 12–October 12, 1969.
3. Interview with Paul Cummings.
4. "Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars," *Everyday Art Quarterly*, #7, Spring 1948, p. 6.
5. Installation labels for "Modern Jewelry Design, 1946–47," The Museum of Modern Art, 1946.
6. Philip Morton, *Contemporary Jewelry: A Craftsman's Handbook*, NY: Holt, Rinehardt, Winston, 1970, p. 3.
7. Interview with Paul Cummings.
8. Interview with Paul Cummings.
9. The Hatch-Billops Collection, Inc., an Archives of Black American Cultural History, along with funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, is currently documenting the work of Art Smith. In a letter to each of his collectors, Camille Billops, executive director of the Hatch-Billops Collection, Inc., requested that they allow their jewelry to be photographed by jeweler/photographer Coreen Simpson. Ms. Billops plans an exhibition of the pictures so that Smith's work will be thus "preserved and celebrated."
10. Interview with Art Smith by Camille Billops and Jim Hatch, November 12, 1974 in New York City.
11. Interview with Paul Cummings.

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A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

by Susan Kingsley

The first feminist was Christine de Pisan. She began writing in defense of women in 1399.

A taboo was broken when the word *"feminist"* was used in the review of "Form Beyond Function" in *Metalsmith* (Spring 1987). In the context of craft, the word "feminist" has been avoided more than any other "f" word in the language. It is like a whispered "communist" must have been in the 1950s. In the last 20 years the women's movement and feminism have produced major changes in our lives and culture. Yet the total absence of any mention of feminism, or the significance of women's involvement, in the current American craft movement and in metalsmithing suggests that these are issues that have not simply been overlooked, but avoided.

The field of metalsmithing has a masculine self-image. Despite the fact that probably two-thirds of American metalsmiths are women, and that many teachers indicate that their metalsmithing classes are predominately women, men have defined the field. With few exceptions, men are the accepted old masters, the leaders, the thinkers, the judges and the juries.

The Facts and Figures of Gender

- In the last 10 years, there have been 92 monographs about artists in *Metalsmith* and *Goldsmiths Journal*. 77% were about male artists and 23% were about female artists.
- Since 1980 there have been 43 articles in *Metalsmith* expressing the opinion of the author. 86% were written by men and 14% by women.
- In the last 10 years, 12 major national metalsmithing exhibitions were juried by 21 men and 7 women.
- 18 people have been elected to the SNAG (Society of North American Goldsmiths) board over the last 10 years. 12 were men and 6 were women.
- In the larger craft context, numbers tell the same story. The catalog essay for "Poetry of the Physical," the opening exhibition at the American Craft Museum, stated, "It is probable that among the leading craftspeople working in the United States today, women form a slight majority." 65% of the artists chosen for that exhibition were male.
- The 1984 NEA Craft Fellowships were awarded as follows: men received $515,000 and women received $240,000; $25,000 awards were awarded to 3 men and no women; $15,000 awards went to 25 men and 9 women; and $5,000 awards were made to 13 men and 21 women.
- Of those who are turned down for NEA Artists Fellowships, 85% of the males try again; 85% of the females do not.

There are no simple explanations for these figures. Should we assume that men do better work? That equally qualified women did not apply for fellowships? That women cannot write art criticism nor judge quality? That women are less career-oriented? That men need higher incomes? Or should we continue to assume that gender does not matter.

It is necessary to look at the facts and to challenge our assumptions. It matters that the generic "artist" and "metalsmith" are male. If you doubt that this is true, try to imagine an art history in which all the great artists were women; or think of our field with the gender hierarchy reversed.

The purpose of counting is to initiate a discussion of the larger issues in metalsmithing, craft and art that are related to gender. Placing blame, naming individuals and discussing personalities accomplishes nothing. But ignoring these statistics, and avoiding the issues that they raise, makes them self-perpetuating.

Gender differences are not biologically determined. What we think of as feminine and masculine characteristics exist, to be sure, but they are *learned*. Women are not born patient, intuitive, good-with-their-hands, emotional and vulnerable. Men are not inherently stronger, capable of leadership, decisive, logical or aggressive. Feminine and masculine are terms that describe different ways of experiencing and expressing our shared humanity, and both ways need to be valued.

We are all alike. We are all human beings. Our system of describing things in opposite terms, in which one thing is usually "better" than the other, promotes conflict and maintains a hierarchy. When we think of masculine and feminine as opposites, we create a hierarchy with masculine *better* than feminine.

All of us, women and men, have inherited biased views of gender, our culture and our history. The enemy is not men, but hierarchy. The purpose of feminist discourse is not to seize power, because power controls and limits, but to reverse the hierarchy.

Feminists feel that recognizing and discussing gender differences is necessary in order to understand this hierarchy. They expose and discuss issues of gender not to separate women, but to enable us to recognize and value what is feminine. The purpose is not to seek special status for women. In the future, or in an ideal world, when feminine and masculine have equal value, this would not be necessary. The feminist movement is not over, and cannot be, until this has happened.

Nearly 20 years ago, the growing consciousness about the status of women in our culture, gave rise to a reexamination of history, literature and art. Both the exclusion of women from art historical discourse and the supposedly impartial methods of art history have been exposed as biased and inadequate. Feminists challenged the assumption that art history is limited to the history of what men have made. They wanted to know what women have created, and under what circumstances. They wanted to know if women artists were recorded in their own time, and why women's achievement has been erased from history.

The growing body of knowledge about women's past achievement in art allows women, for the first time, to see themselves in the context of history. The consideration of sexual attitudes and assumptions on art and art history has opened the possibility for new insights and enrichment.

Until this year, H.W. Janson's *History of Art*, the standard college text, did not include a single woman. Art history books, as we all know, have also excluded craft. There was no general history of craft until 1981, when Edward Lucie-Smith's *The Story of Craft* was published. And there still is no *Complete History of Metalsmithing.*

From a feminist perspective, one that questions assumptions, and challenges hierarchies, the next questions are obvious:

- Could there be a connection between the exclusion of women and of craft from art history?
- Is it because we have defined art in a particular way, that both craft and women have been eliminated from discourse?
- And is it possible that the ideas of art and craft have been placed in opposition, creating a hierarchy that is similar to the gender hierarchy?

A review of art history, including both *women* and *craft* could be revealing.

Gender and Art History

In the beginning, everything made was craft, *made* by women, and skills were passed from mother to daughter. In time, when a particular craft left the domestic environment and became a means of earning a living for an entire family, it became a man's occupation as well. The special skills of craftworkers usually set them apart and sometimes set them at the bottom of the social scale.

Early in the Middle Ages, under Christianity, handwork acquired dignity for religious reasons. Women in convents produced illuminated manuscripts, and noblewomen, nuns and even queens did needlework. Women also worked along with men in workshops on secular estates. During the late Middle Ages, craft became very specialized and a complex system of guilds arose. Goldsmiths, at this time, enjoyed a special position among craftsmen. Knowledge of the craft was passed on in an empirical way.

During the Renaissance, fine arts and artists came to be perceived as entirely different. As admirers of antiquity, Renaissance men adopted the social hierarchies suggested by Aristotle. The art of painting was esteemed and thought to be a worthy pursuit for gentlemen. Occupations that involved working with the hands were considered menial.

It was believed that success in art was due to inborn genius. Vasari said that Michelangelo was "directly inspired by God, enabling mankind to see the fateful results, when an artist of sublime intellect, infused with divine grace and knowledge, appears on earth." In reality, men who showed artistic talent were given encouragement, a lengthy education and the opportunity to travel and study human anatomy.

Gender differences are not biologically determined. What we think of as feminine and masculine characteristics exist, to be sure, but they are learned. Women are not born patient, intuitive, good-with-their-hands, emotional and vulnerable.

Women were not expected to be geniuses, nor inspired by God. Unless they were to become nuns, women were not educated. They were not free to travel to study art or anatomy. Only women born into families of artists had any access to training, and until the 19th century, almost all women who made names for themselves as painters were relatives of male artists.

It appears that women did not have a "Renaissance." A new division between personal and public life made itself felt, and the modern relation of the sexes made its first appearance. Women were increasingly removed from public concerns, and Renaissance ideas on love and manners required a new subordination of women to their husbands.

During the late Middle Ages, misogynist ideas were popularized by vigorous, crude, vernacular literature that criticized women, marriage and love, and promoted the idea of sexual conquest and abandonment. Even clerical writing contained loathing for women and the female body.

The first feminist was Christine de Pisan. She began writing in defense of women in 1399 to protest their declining position and argue against misogyny in the attitudes and reading of her time. The literary debate she initiated, which argued for a more universal idea of humanity, lasted over 400 years.

And so the course was set. Painting was an intellectual pursuit, suitable for gentlemen. Great artists were men, who were inspired by God. Personal life and private life became separate. Because craft had economic value, it was practiced by men. Craft was equated with technical skill and was considered menial. Women were not educated. Women were excluded from public affairs, and dependent upon husbands. Misogyny was a popular pastime.

"Progress" in the 19th Century

The next significant changes in thinking about women and craft occurred during the last century. The Industrial Revolution had changed two things. Manufactured, standardized objects had, by this time, almost completely replaced those made by craftsmen. And a division of labor had occurred, which separated women from the labor force and placed them at home with their children.

Around the middle of the last century, the emigration of available young men to the West created a problem. Society had no place for the growing numbers of unmarried middle-class women. Marriage was the only sanctified means to social recognition, status and security, and the idea of "work," for a "lady," was a contradiction of terms.

Art was viewed as one of the few suitable occupations, as it could be seen as an extension of the traditional female accomplishments. It also would not threaten the social

order nor take jobs from men. Women could be employed as art teachers or in the newly developing area of industrial design.

For this reason, a number of schools of art and design, exclusively for women, were established both here and in England. Among them were the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, 1844; The Worcester Employment Society, 1856 (which became the Worcester Craft Center in 1940), the Cooper Union in New York, 1859; and later the Newcomb College Pottery of New Orleans, 1895.

Women who wished to study fine arts in the last century, however, had to struggle for adequate instruction and the high standards that would allow them to be professional artists and competitive with men. Fine arts was still considered man's work, and the resistance to women seemed to be as much economic as social. One of the greatest difficulties was that women were denied the possibility of drawing from nude models, when the important forms of art depended upon the ability to depict the human body.

Despite negative social pressures and the difficulties in obtaining training faced by women artists in the 19th century, many succeeded as professional painters and graphic artists. During the latter half of the century, many women studied in Europe. A remarkable group of American women sculptors, sometimes called "the white marmorean flock," lived and worked in Rome.

Throughout the 19th century, women worked for equal rights and suffrage. The first women's rights convention took place at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. The 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote, was not passed until 1920.

The debates of this century are not much different. A proposed constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the same rights as men has yet to be passed. And the issues of separatism raised by the recent opening of the National Museum of Women in the Arts were debated more than a century ago, when there was a separate Women's Pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.

The exposition was important in bringing about the Aesthetic Movement in America. The ideas and artifacts from England, the carved wood, pottery and needlework by American women, and the beautiful esthetic objects from many other countries had an enormous effect upon the ten million viewers. Individually and collectively, the work of women artists could not be ignored. They received qualified support by men who thought "feminine art" (in its own separate sphere) should be encouraged if it would "keep women busy" and away from the ballot box.

The Aesthetic Movement, and the closely related Arts and Crafts Movement, encouraged women to enter the field of art. It provided them with paying work and a sense of self-worth. However, there was still enough resistance to the idea of women working for wages that most did not question the lower pay they received.

In the last 20 years the women's movement and feminism have produced major changes in our lives and culture. Yet the total absence of any mention of feminism, or the significance of women's involvement, in the current American craft movement and in metalsmithing suggests that these are issues that have not simply been overlooked, but avoided.

Since craftwork was seen as similar to the traditional female accomplishments, the judgment "amateurish" was often attached to women's work no matter what its quality. Money had taken on such importance in the estimation of intrinsic value, that something not done for money was seen as of little value, and therefore low quality.

In the workshops where there was a division of labor, women did the more menial jobs. Much of the work not requiring a studio or workshop was done in the isolation of the home, which prevented women from a sense of intellectual equality with men. In England, gender-separate arts and crafts organizations further reinforced the hierarchy.

Despite the intention of rejoining fine and decorative arts, a goal put forth by John Ruskin, William Morris and others, just the opposite occurred. The hierarchy became fixed and clear. The fine arts were a public professional activity, comprised of forms of artistic expression open only to men. The fact that craft was domestic, both in its intended use and because much of it was made at home, by women, was significant. Craft objects themselves, and their materials, have little to do with the distinction.

Although metalsmithing had the tradition of being a male occupation, it was not thought an unsuitable artistic pursuit for women. Jewelry and holloware could be done in a small home workshop and fit the accepted assumptions about women's natural capabilities for intricate work. However, jewelry was not a major focus in either the Aesthetic Movement nor the Arts and Crafts Movement, in England or in America.

At the turn of the century, misogyny reached its alltime peak. There appears to have been an unprecedented attack on women by philosophers, writers, scientists, artists and intellectuals. They believed that women had not been able to participate in the great evolutionary process that was guiding the intellectual male.

And so the course continued. Women were defined by their domestic functions. Painting continued to be considered men's work. Women were encouraged to become artists but in ways that would not threaten men economically or intellectually. Forms of art that didn't require genius were suitable for women. Craftwork was domestic art, and therefore appropriate. Art was considered preferable to political activism for women. Middle class women were considered amateurs and their work inferior. Misogyny ws pervasive.

Feminism

It has only been in the last 20 to 30 years that women have had available to them the conditions necessary to become artists, the conditions that men have always had: freedom from social restraint, to own property,

to travel independently, and access to a professional education. In addition, women have, for the first time, the means to control their fertility without denying their sexuality. For most of us, this is our lifetime, and we aren't aware of the newness of this situation.

The idea of women as artists is new; it is still, today, almost a contradiction in terms. We are only aware of the history of male artists in painting and sculpture. No one challenged that "real art" required male genius. A 19th-century writer stated it clearly: "So long as a woman refrains from unsexing herself by acquiring genius, let her dabble in anything. The woman of genius does not exist but when she does she is a man."

Around 1970 some women artists began to have a new consciousness about their femaleness. The fact of being discriminated against by the art establishment was only part of it. They realized that their work was not being understood in the way it was intended because it didn't rely on the same conventions and assumptions as male-dominated mainstream art.

They also recognized that what they had thought were their personal experiences as artists, were shared by other women. Instead of trying to make it as "one of the boys," they began to work together. In order to provide a context for growth and promote understanding of their work, they formed women's art centers and held exhibitions of women's art.

There was a growing awareness that the current definitions of art, and the criteria used to judge it were not adequate. Critic Lucy Lippard, one of the first to recognize the situation, said in her book of essays *From The Center*: "Some women artists are consciously reacting against avant-gardism and retrenching in esthetic areas neglected or ignored in the past; others are unaffected by such rebellious motivations but continue to work in personal modes that outwardly resemble varied art styles of the recent past."

She said that looking at women's art challenged all her assumptions. "I thought important American art was large. I found women working small, both out of inclination and necessity. I thought important art had to show a formal 'advance' over the art preceding it. I found that I could be moved more by content than by context. I was accustomed to male artists coming on with a veneer of self-confidence, jargon, articulation of formal problems, in other words, 'knowing what they were doing.' I found some women were confused, unsure of themselves, much more vulnerable, but at the same time far more willing to open up themselves and their work to personal and associative readings on the part of the viewer, willing to participate in the sharing of their art, their experience, and their lives. It is no coincidence that the advent of a behaviorist, autobiographical art coincided with the rise of the women's movement."

One of the most discussed issues to have been raised is the issue of female sensibility.

Recent work by women metalsmiths displays many similarities to feminist art. Some of the similarities may seem stylistic, but I believe that they are ideological.

Lucy Lippard said that after looking at the work of virtually thousands of women, that she can no longer deny that there is a uniquely female expression, whether it is innate or a result of social conditioning. She said that ". . .women's social, biological, and political experiences are different from those of men; (and) art is born of those experiences. . . ."

Qualities which have been described as feminine include softness, biomorphic shapes, layering, fragmentation, repetition, patterning, the use of grids, circles, domes and central core images. Beyond imagery the qualities become more vague but have to do with intimacy and emotion.

If art is a kind of visual communication, a comparison with verbal communication confirms the idea that women and men express themselves differently. Linguists tell us that women's language features more indirection and qualification. Women often end their sentences with a question. They feel less comfortable with direct, authoritative, categorical assertion. This may be because their social experience has made them less confident, but it also allows for a richer inclusiveness, wouldn't you agree?

On the other hand, some see the issue of "sensibility" as a way to stereotype women's work and thus make it more easily dismissable. They argue that there is no separate tradition of women's art, and no feminine sensibility traceable in the work of women throughout the course of western art history. It is their separate position in society, rather than any innate or stylistic difference, that distinguishes women's work.

As women turned to their own lives as source and tried to use their own images, they saw the need to address the use of the female image. Throughtout history, "women" have been defined by the images that men have made of them. As nymphs and goddesses, as virgins and whores, as playmates of the month and as Miss "you-name-it," women have been depicted as silent and powerless, as objects for others to behold.

Some women identified with the sensuality of natural forms, and used it in a metaphorical way, deliberately rejecting its opposite, "culture," which is male. Some used overt sexual images in order to boldly claim ownership of their own eroticism, countering years (and centuries) of repression.

Recent work by women metalsmiths displays many similarities to feminist art. Some of the similarities may seem stylistic, but I believe that they are ideological. Their thinking seems not to be adopted from the feminist movement but has evolved individually, often in isolation. If women share a common belief in the field of metalsmithing, it is the idea that art should be derived from and be relevant to life. In a culture that is unaccustomed to the idea of well-crafted metal art objects made by women, their work is frequently misunderstood.

Because women cannot fully identify with

the history of art, and because a "long tradition of metalsmithing" has not been clearly defined, contemporary women see an opportunity to participate in its creation. Many women have concentrated on formal problems and design, enjoying the lack of a preexisting "male" tradition as well as all gender issues.

Because they do not identify with western art history, or the current meanings of jewelry in our culture, many women have looked to other cultures—prehistoric, ancient, primitive and ethnic—for overlooked and forgotten meanings for jewelry and for art. Because our culture has separated art from life, they search for ways of reconnecting them.

Metalsmithing, itself, makes this connection. In some cases, the choice to work in a craft media was made in order to avoid the patriarchial history of painting and sculpture. The notion of great inborn artistic genius has no counterpart in craft. As craft is still thought by many to be dependent upon learned skills, women have sensed that they would have an equal chance for success. Women no longer doubt that there is anything that they cannot learn to do.

Mastering a craft has a special meaning to many women. Because positions of power have been denied women in our culture, having perfect control over materials can be a kind of revenge. In the studio, she can become the ruler of perfection. It is not until someone comments on her *mastery,* or good craft*man*ship, that she realizes that she can't get credit in her own name.

Because women's lives often seem fragmented by their multiple roles, many are drawn to long, repetitive, obsessive processes that offer an opportunity for intense, focused attention. Working becomes a meditation, or what Lucy Lippard describes as a ritual "antidote to isolation and despair. Repetition can be a guard against vulnerability . . . a bullet proof vest of closely knit activity woven against fate."

Because women's lives often seem "used up" in doing things that are invisible to others, undervalued or impermanent, many women find satisfaction in the sense of permanence that metalsmithing provides. Metal keeps the shape it is given, solder is forever and effort is permanently recorded.

Because women may have ideas that have not been expressed in art before, they develop new techniques and technologies for expressing them. Women metalsmiths have taught themselves, and others, to wrap, knit, etch, weave, marry, inlay, electroform, paint and press metals in ways that men have not. Technical innovation in art is an innovation in itself.

Because women wear jewelry in our culture, they understand meanings for jewelry that men cannot. They understand the wearing of jewelry as a dramatic performance, a transforming experience or as a medium for self-expression. They understand the subtle qualities of jewelry that its physical presence on the body create; its weight, sound and movement.

Because women's lives often seem "used up" in doing things that are invisible to others, undervalued or impermanent, many women find satisfaction in the sense of permanence that metalsmithing provides.

Because women have learned to interact with others in ways that foster the other person's development, they teach workshops and share their knowledge freely. This apparently recent and distinctly American custom in crafts, the widespread sharing of technical innovation and information should *probably* be credited to women.

Because women reject being passive decorative objects themselves, they do not tend to make passive decorative objects. Many women charge their work with emotional currents; the themes of restrained violence, and unresolved confinement, noted in the previously mentioned review of women's sculpture in "Form Beyond Function." Many women make their work a statement about their own condition; what you see is one thing, but what is hidden and what you "get" is something else.

And finally, because women and men are not opposites, it is likely that many men share with women these connections to metalsmithing.

Crafts and the Hierarchy

The current craft movement has been greatly influenced by the social changes brought about by the women's movement. Increasing numbers of women expect that *their* lives will include meaningful and satisfying work and have chosen careers in art. This is certainly true in metalsmithing, and it would be impossible to imagine the field without the contributions of women over the last 20 years.

Yet metalsmithing, like the other crafts and the "fine arts," has been dominated by men. There are, of course, successful women. But despite "new" opportunities for women to become artists, they have not achieved success in proportion to their numbers in the field.

Feminists have exposed and rejected the stereotypes that have kept women separate as well as the restrictions of the accepted definitions of art. They have refused to be confined, ignored or contained and seek a new meaning for the word artist that doesn't need to be qualified by the word woman.

And what about craft? By *not* questioning the assumptions and stereotypes that keep it in a secondary position, "craft" has continued to operate within the hierarchy, and, in fact, supports it.

How can an art historical tradition, based on archaic assumptions and a distorted and limited vision of human potential possibly claim intellectual superiority?

Can anyone explain why reason and tradition are more important than skill and imagination?

Is there any reason why art that is "public," made to decorate white-walled galleries and

museums, is more worthy of consideration than that which is personal and meant to enhance a person's body or immediate environment?

Is there any reason why the exclusion of artists working in craft media from publicly funded art museums is not a political issue?

And finally, has craft challenged the relevancy of "mainstream art" to contemporary society?

By participating in the hierarchy, crafts actually support the leading position of fine arts by playing second fiddle to it. The American Craft Museum, for instance, assures that craft remains separate and in second place by providing a reason for art museums to *not* show it. It creates the division and provides justification for galleries and art critics to see it as separate and to continue to exclude it from serious art discourse. (This, of course, is why most feminists have refused to support the National Museum of Women in the Arts.)

Success for a craft artist seems to be defined as having broken into the system, by being an "exception" to the rule, much as successful women artists of the past were considered freaks of nature. As exceptions, they reinforce the idea that craft is not art. Most of those who have "crossed over" and are accepted into the world of fine art are men, reinforcing the idea that rare "genius," found only in males, is the necessary ingredient for success.

An increasing number of craft artists have magnified the scale of their work. Larger scale work holds the possibility of shifting the emphasis from domestic to public, making it eligible to be called art. The public intention, then, makes it possible to overlook the craft material. Unfortunately, it does *not* lead people to conclude that small work can also be successfully made out of the same material, but reinforces the idea that important work is *big*.

Another phenomena that works against craft is that big-time artists, when they work in a craft context, still produce only minor work. Picasso's ceramic plates and Calder's jewelry are rarely mentioned when their work is discussed.

Finally, the qualities that may "elevate" craft into the realm of art are often those that refer to and support art history and its theories. Robert Arneson, exasperated, makes a plate comparing himself to Leonardo; and Donald Kuspit has a light bulb go on over his head. It's art! He's made it into the club! We congratulate Bob but have to realize that it is no victory for those who are committed to the small scale domestic tradition of craft. And for women, it underscores the additional difficulty that there are no female Leonardos to compare ourselves with.

Accepting its place in the hierarchy, the craft world seems to be endlessly waiting for the boundaries between art and craft to disappear. By trying to be as intellectual as, as public as, as financially successful as and as star-studded as the fine art world, craftsmen participate in and support the system. From a feminist perspective, this approach is totally inappropriate.

Since craftwork was seen as similar to the traditional female accomplishments, the judgment "amateurish" was often attached to women's work no matter what its quality.

A feminist perspective makes possible a more complete view, somewhat like seeing with two eyes instead of one. We see a world that is *not* flat. By challenging our assumptions about gender, and everything that follows, we can see that we have had a limited and distorted view of ourselves. In human terms, it is like discovering that the world is round. We double our potential.

Now, at the end of the twentieth century, perhaps the increasing participation of women, in all aspects of society, will lead to a true rebirth. A balance between masculine and feminine values could make possible a New Age, and create a new meaning for art that reflects the complete range of human potential and participation. Women and men could then be seen as human beings with equal potential, and craft and art would no longer be opposites.

This paper was presented at the annual conference of the Society of North American Goldsmiths at Cranbrook Academy of Art, June, 1987.

Acknowledgments

The author extends her thanks to all the women who helped on the research of this article by replying to her questionnaire.

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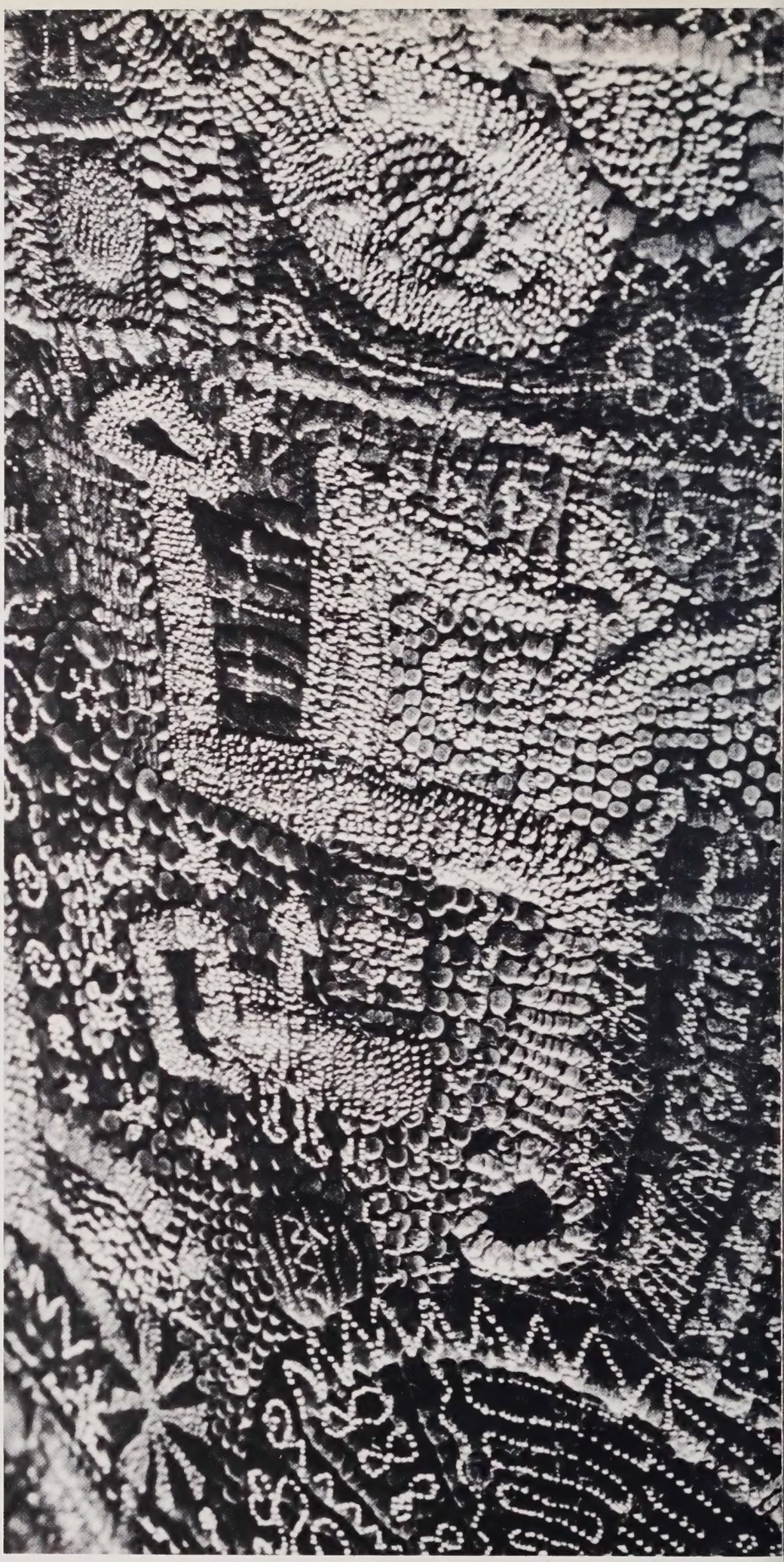
KILLING TIME
The Work of Gary Noffke

by Michael Dunas

Preparation for writing this piece began, I guess, when I was six or seven years old. At that age, my whole world was confined to a small yet comfortable apartment in Brooklyn decorated in the material evidence of my parents' modest means. The customary appointments of sofa, chairs, dining table, drapes, offered little in the way of fantasy or even amusement. They all were part and parcel of my parents' world, a world I was instructed to respect, a world of listless and foreboding icons, off limits to me, all except one—the "Frigidaire." Here was something to get excited about. At a party, everyone would hang out by the frig—staunch, robust, its belly filled with the impending repast. Late at night, the sleepless were eventually drawn to pilfering by its beacon. Every holiday, every memorable occasion was marked by the ebb and flow of its contents. It was the treasury of my family's wealth and the appliance that ministered to their good-natured hospitality.

Early on, I realized that you are what you eat. So, one evening, during a rare opportunity, left unattended, I paid homage to the most important object in my life—I painted the refrigerator. I covered its entire surface with scribblings, letterforms, borrowed images, everything a child's mind could muster. I used crayon, watercolors, magic markers, finger paints, silly putty—anything I could get my hands on. I even crawled behind the refrigerator to decorate its unseemly side and then, when done, I signed my name over the "GM" hallmark—it was mine. When my parents returned, they did not hesitate to forever discourage the defiling of such functional beauty. While scars ran deep, the memory of that ecstatic evening lingered. Ever since I have been looking for Gary Noffke.

You cannot help being entranced by Gary Noffke's own brand of scribblings and graffitilike markings. You cannot let go of their enigmatic code. Like scrimshaw that inevitably draws us to the experience of the



Detail of chased pattern on *18k Gold Goblet*, 16cm h. 1970 (see *cover*) **inset:** goblet full view

carver, to his state of mind as he scribed his sentiments during long hours of isolation, Noffke's markings invite curiosity and amusement. These markings render Noffke's objects antique—musty relics, curios with no clue to their origin, use or provenance. Yet they feel special, objects that have distinct meaning to someone, somewhere; heirlooms lost to their owners. We cherish such discoveries, like old family photos, remnants of a protracted story. We keep them, hoping someday to find a clue to why these objects were important, hoping someday to share in their memories.

Gary Noffke began these mysterious markings on metal, this hermetic language, chiseled, or, more appropriately, chased, on surfaces of commonplace forms quite early in his career. Arriving at the University of Iowa in 1967, seeking a Masters degree in fine art as a painter, he realized that he was one of 500 or so potential candidates. Not one to be part of the crowd, he reevaluated his interest in metal. He had already experienced some attraction for the medium while at Eastern Illinois University, as an undergraduate taking courses with Garret De Ruiter. He decided to pursue metalsmithing with Raoul Delmar at Iowa. This decision led him to further study with Brent Kington at SIU. At Carbondale, Noffke used the surface of metal forms to continue the insouciant, instinctive, informal approach to composition and technique that he had employed in his paintings.

Noffke's early metalwork sacrificed form for the sake of ornamentation. He attacked the metal relentlessly. Stamping, piercing, chasing and engraving covered everything from necklaces to knives. He used the form of commonplace objects as a come-on, suckering viewers into the complex, diminutive world of his personal iconography. Ironically, however, his text was opaque and noncommunicative. While traditionally, decoration is used to augment forms that are restrictive in the amount of information they carry, with Noffke the decorative surface is legible, but, on closer inspection, it becomes more chaotic and incoherent, a secret code of ciphers an cryptographs.

The finest example of this early work is undoubtedly the 18k gold goblet from 1970 (see Cover). Already considered by some the "holy grail" of metalsmithing, this goblet incorporates all of Noffke's esthetic "tricks." It is pre-Columbian, Peruvian, in design, signalling his interest in simple classic forms. The surface is entirely covered with fastidious chasing, so much so that some who have used the goblet claim that the surface "squishes" to the touch. The pattern is beyond explication. A square centimeter may contain letterforms, hearts, arrows, crosses, dollar signs, eyes, geometric symbols, cowboys, stars, words that have no apparent context. It goes on and on in a mysterious narrative known only to the maker. As we inspect these markings at close range, we become enveloped by their self-contained

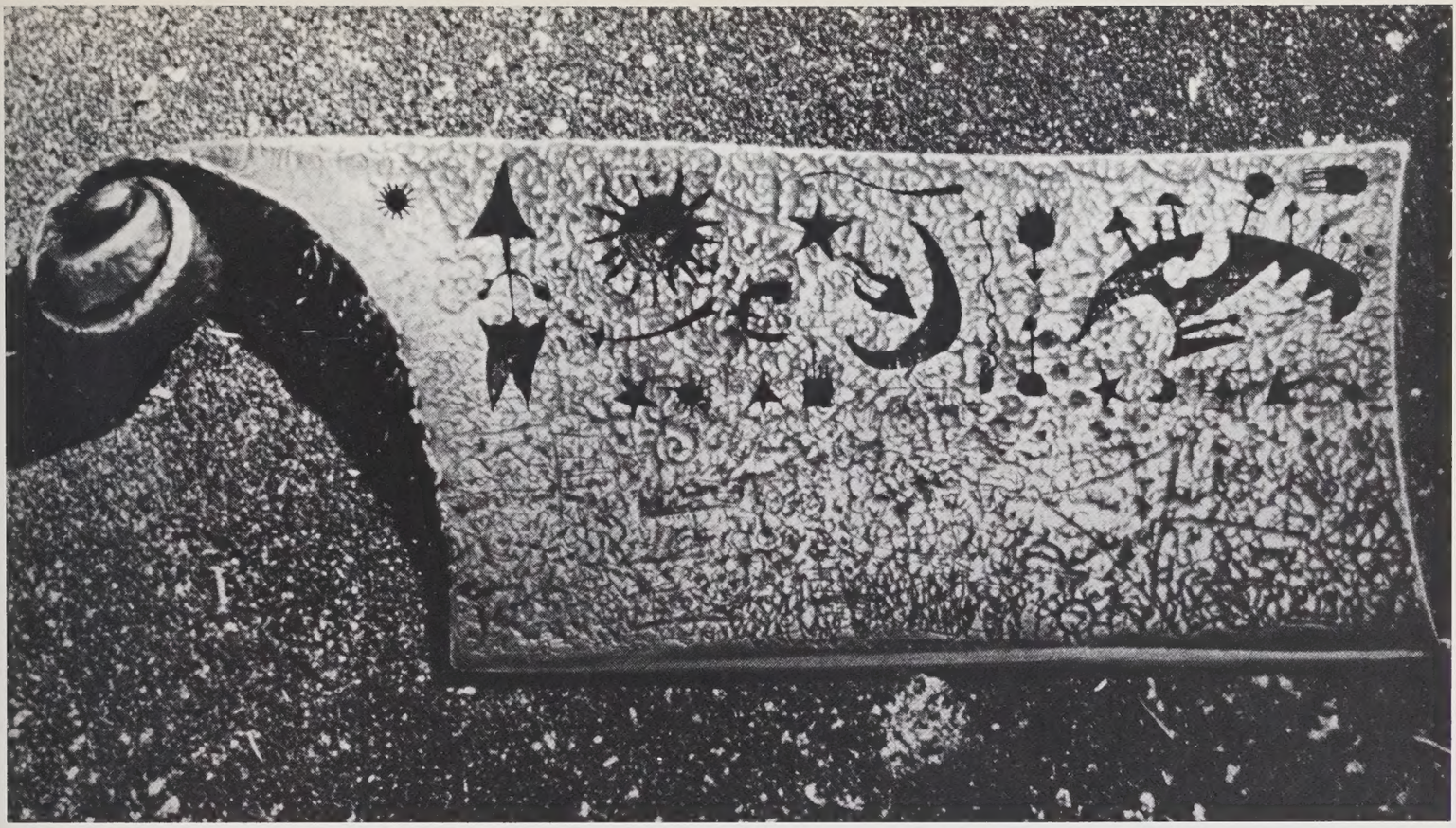
text. Focusing on a detail leads immediately to inspection of the adjacent scenario. We can frame each segment almost indiscriminantly. There is no rhyme or reason to the composition. We are intrigued and continue to ask, why in the world did he do this? What do these markings mean? We become so absorbed that the goblet disappears. We are more concerned with the mind of the maker than the goblet itself.

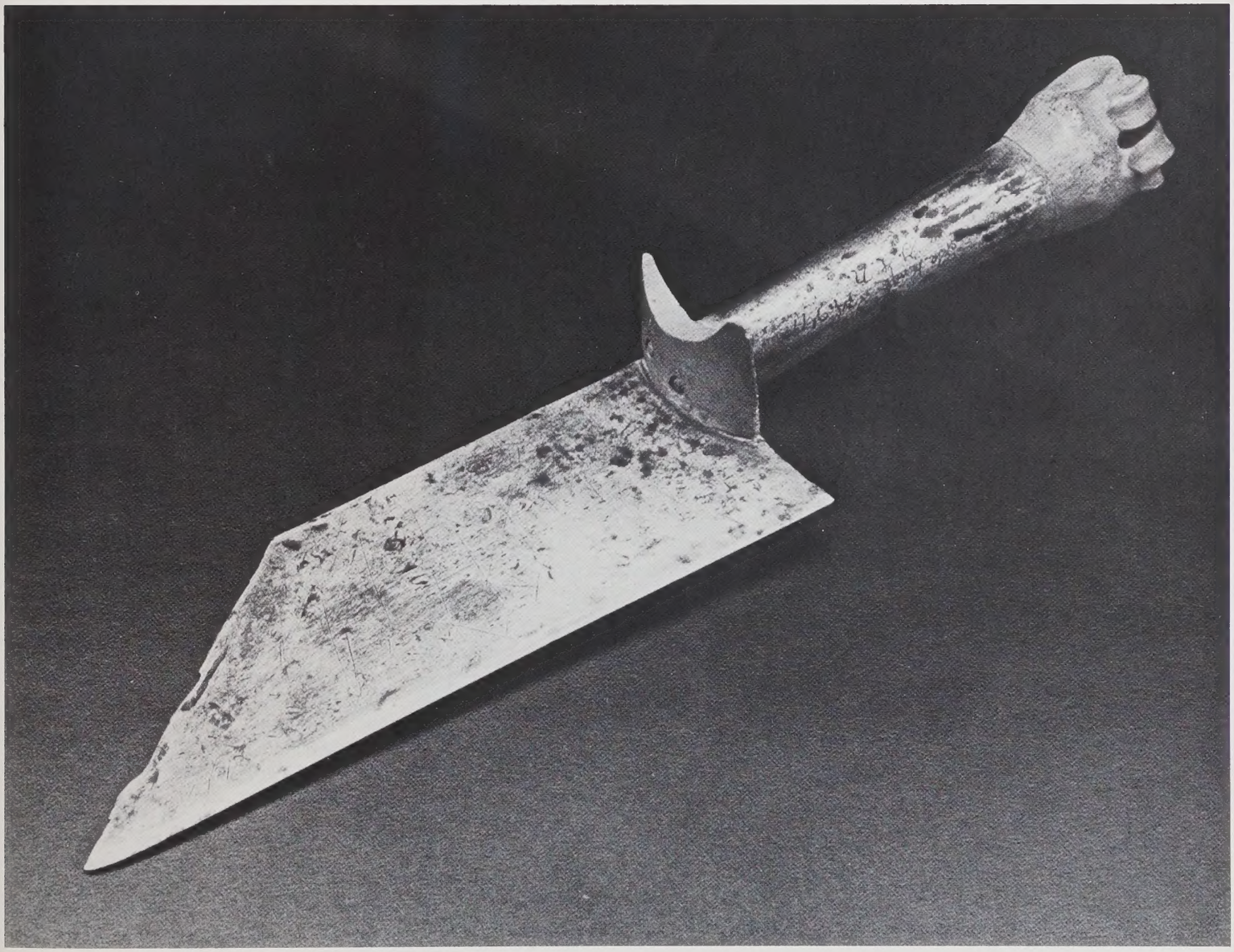
But Noffke draws us back to reality, for in the end the piece is only a humble goblet. Legend has it that he carries the goblet around in a gunnysack ready to pull it out on appropriate occasions, to drink wine on a trout stream or beer at a clambake.

There are more stories about Gary Noffke than you could shake a stick at. The tales of his metalsmithing exploits, not only in regard to his work but also to his approach to work, leave in their wake a reputation of self-indulgence, arrogance and independence—the ultimate maverick in a profession that by appearances has so few. These tales serve not only to fuel his professional reputation but more importantly to extend the reverberations of his philosophy seen in his objects, lifestyle and method. Since, for Noffke, they are all interdependent. By his own admission, he is a "reprobate," although his esthetic effects can be appreciated for their own sake, his approach to metalsmithing is a major factor in the esthetic statement. He has chosen to work in and through the metal tradition. He is reacting against the tight, constrained, self-conscious working mthods. He is reacting against the formal contrived decoration that is its assumed language. He is reacting against the "preciousness" of gold. He is reacting against the loss of social relevance in contemporary metalsmithing. All this is in evidence in the ultimate statement of the goblet and its use.

Although Noffke appears an incorrigible iconoclast, he has an affinity for process that is essential to the metalsmithing mind. For example, in working for months on chasing the surface of the goblet, spending endless hours, Noffke was apparently mesmerized by the personal narrative of his own "real" time. Cognitive thought about design or form or structure conceivably dissipates with such tortured constraint. One's hand has been given its freedom and it discharges its twitching energy upon the passive metal; one's conscious mind, at such a moment, is probably doing no more than observing the slowly changing tangle of forms. What time that can be spared is taken up in contemplating, not design, but the subject of the piece. The demanding nature of the work causes the mind to be thinking of one thing while feeling and doing something else. Noffke's mind is obviously engrossed in something else beyond the handiwork. As this test of endurance and concentration

Left: *Pocket Knife,* sterling silver, gold, steel, 5" l. open, 1974. Photo: Evon Streetman. **Opposite page, top:** *Chopping Knife,* forged and pierced tool steel, 4 x 8", 1970; **right:** *Knife (Shark),* steel, bone, 27.5 x 3.5 x 6 cm





continues, the hand becomes involved more and more in killing time, allowing technique to more fully approximate subconscious thought. As Noffke's pictures take form, it appears that his hand hardly pauses to consult his intentions, seemingly lost as he is in the intense reveries of his thoughts, whatever they might be. That Noffke does not make the viewer privy to his thoughts is of little consequence to his affirmation of the maker's independence from form. If the maker focuses the whole of his conscious mind on technique, his natural instinct will thus be freed to resolve things on another level and in its own terms.[1] Noffke's craft relies on the work and time necessary to transform an already familiar material to approximate his intuition. It further requires the viewer's innate appreciation of work, time, material and function to bind its meaning.

Noffke's obsessive surface manipulation, as pyrotechnic as it is, suggests a subtle dichotomy in his approach to "process." On one hand, he commends the metalsmith for his ability to communicate through process, yet, on the other, chastises him for obfuscating intuitive communication through excessive finishing. This concern for transparent process continues to develop throughout his later work, where the virtuoso chasing and iconoclastic attitude toward metal begins to dissipate. Maybe as a result of maturity or inner resolve, Noffke is less concerned with "getting a reaction" from the metals community. This is not to say that the "reprobate" has become prodigal. There are plenty of recent tales, of Noffke demonstrating the fine art of gem setting by employing glue to control a recalcitrant stone, or by finishing a baby's spoon by shearing the edge of the bowl. The endearing "black sense of humor" and caustic wit continues to surface now and then, but the major pieces are more straightforward, more restrained in approach. The gold goblet and stamped necklaces are truly memorable but only an isolated outburst when we consider the whole body of Noffke's work. The spoons, knives, cups, spatulas, the range of utilitarian ware form a coherent opus that in retrospect successfully quiets the memory of the goblet.

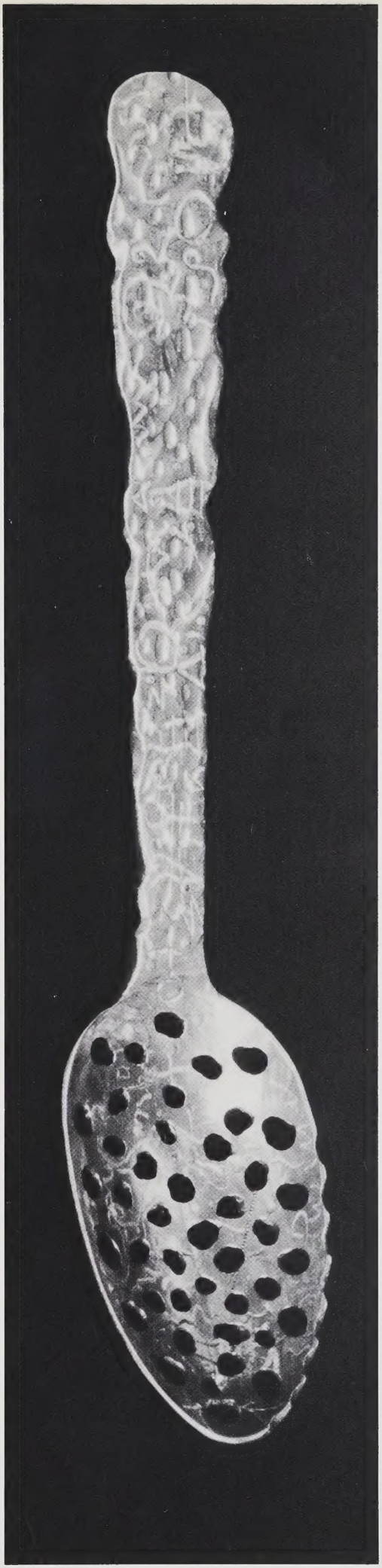
In these, Noffke's motivation to art maintains a link to function as its guiding principle. In graduate school at Carbondale, Noffke was moved by a knife made by Brent Kington. It convinced him that simple though unusual objects were valid and appropriate forms in the pursuit of art. Stirred by the conscience of the 60s, Noffke has doggedly sought the resolve of art and social relevance in utility. As he has said, with function you can't go wrong, there is no fear that you have "wasted materials" in merely a self-serving activity.

Noffke's peculiar brand of functional objects uses utility as a received value. The knives, spatulas, cups are not unusual in form nor do they pose design problems that suggest innovation. In fact, their historical references are familiar, friendly, reliable,

durable tools and utensils that will serve us well if respected and cared for. They appear to have been "found" at a flea market, imbued with a history and mystery as well as rejuvenated in reuse. Noffke imposes himself on these familiar forms, celebrating their value with his manipulation of surface and subtle changes to utility. He is not calling attention to the object itself but to our relationship with the object. By interposing himself, through the personality of his handwork, he is illuminating the functional personality of the objects. Utility becomes a bridge to but not the end result of his work. The tool is not merely task oriented but a true partner in activity, in which Noffke is a catalyst. The closest analogy is with a farmer's self-sufficient relationship with his material world. The farmer respects his tools and utensils as members of the family, as essential extensions of his ability to maintain a lifestyle that is independent and tailored to his constituted needs.

The implications of Noffke's approach commends a mode of communication in material evidence, a style imposed on function. Every time someone has manipulated matter, in a particular way, to satisfy his practical or esthetic needs, he made a statement. Yet, it is the nonverbal, unspoken perhaps even unconscious nature of the statement that gives it particular meaning. In any age there are certain widely shared beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, values that are so obvious that they remain unstated. They are clearly seen and communicated not in what society says it is doing but rather in the way that society makes things. The way things are made in society, at a particular time in history, is its style, communicated by the maker and communicative of the reigning ideas of culture.[2]

Noffke's style is nonverbal, nonliteral and probably unconscious, but a style nonetheless. It is not meant to be systematically analyzed but to be appreciated as material evidence of Noffke's working time. Though some of the iconography is familiar, it is incidental as a result of Noffke's free use of any available shape and image provided by the culture. He is trying to debilitate our need to read the work in favor of an intuitive response. If we must, we could find a relationship with anonymous graffiti, ancient hieroglyphs, as well as the accidental effects of wear or tear, or even, in the most surreal, a product of automatic writing. But no matter, that course of inquiry will lead nowhere. Noffke is intent on confronting our inhibitions toward appreciating the object for what it is. Even though we don't know why or when the maker produced this artifact, or that it was made for the maker's own delectation, shielded from interpretation, it is valid because it exists and becomes part of the material culture to be used and cherished.



Opposite page: *Swine Horn*, carved sterling silver, raised, cast. Fabricated, 24" h., 1970; *Caper Spoon*, forged sterling silver, carved, stamped, pierced, 5 x 7/8", 1986

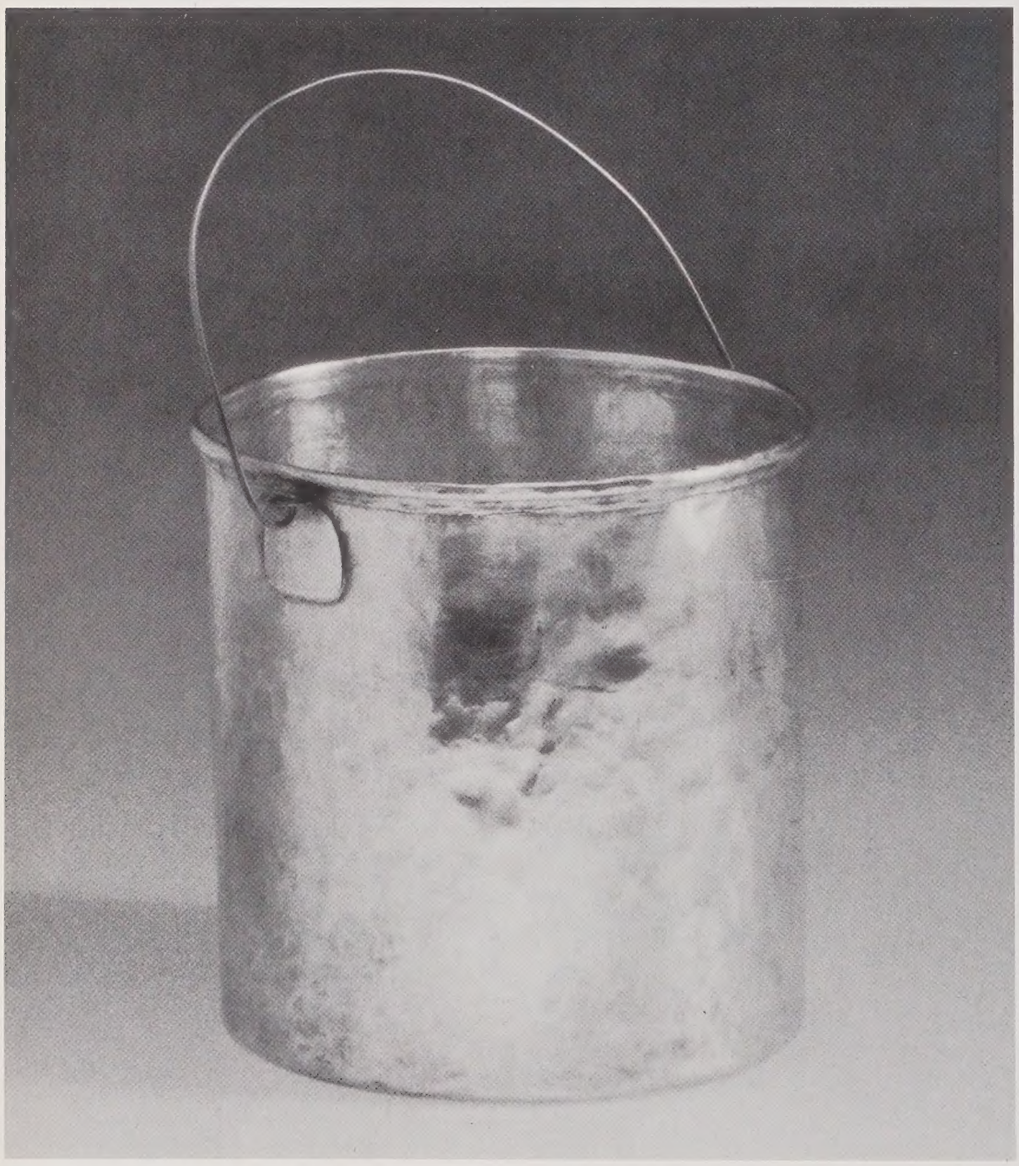
There is yet another story about Noffke that helps to illustrate this point. As the story goes, being despondent over the absence of his work in the prestigious Vatican collection of historic metalwork, Noffke decided to take matters in his own hands. He ventured to Rome and surreptitiously placed one of his pieces in a dark and dusty corner of the collection. The hypothetical consequences of this incredible story are both humorous and provocative. What are the officials to conclude when they discover this piece? Although they would not be able to establish its provenance, they are faced with the dilemma of establishing its worth purely upon esthetic criteria. Should they discard it because they did not know where it came from, or should they keep it if they believe that its esthetic value is comparable to other works in the collection.

Whether fact or fiction, such stories are evidence that Noffke's humble objects have a compelling effect upon his audience based on their relationship to lifestyle issues, metalsmithing history and ultimately to Noffke, the maker. By calling attention to the values that produced the artist, Noffke's objects function socially not only through utility but also through their inclusion in a cultural dialogue. The integrity of the artist is enhanced as his spirit and intellect operate to culturally transform useful objects in the "domestic" arena.

Noffke's determination to work in a straightforward manner, to simplify the already simple, to temper his arrogant behavior in all-consuming decoration, to be more unadulterated, more commonplace, practical, antivirtuous, to push the limits of the humble object is the overriding esthetic of his current work. If the gold goblet symbolizes his early period, the capuccino steamer (1984) signals his current temperament.

In form, the steamer is simply an inverted funnel with a long gooseneck spout, rendered with humorous associations to oil cans and rural stills. The fabrication is bare minimum handiwork, with crimped base and hammered vessel. There is no attempt to finish the piece—a signature Noffke effect that challenges the viewer as to its ultimate intention. The material is base metal, copper, though Noffke has manufactured one out of silver for exhibition—a jab at preciousness.

This unpretentious, anonymous, junkyard relic is an effective counterpoint to the proliferation of commercial capuccino makers on the market and the attendant ritual of brewing coffee that has instigated their revival. When we consider the chrome and steel icons that are being produced by notable designers, stylized after traditional Italian coffeepots or Bauhaus "modern" machines, we can see the assertions of a prescribed socioeconomic class. Espresso and capuccino have become the preferred after-dinner drink of the cognoscenti and thus the appropriate design must glorify its ritual through a fashionable object of use.



Noffke's steamer stands as a stoic alternative. It reclaims coffeemaking as a quotidian and egalitarian activity. Capuccino, that European culinary delight is still coffee and can be made and drunk without assuming the guise of fashionable ritual and appointments.

As an object, in itself, it is as strong and evocative as any other capuccino maker. The raw intensity and readable function conveys and interprets its operation. Although I have not tested its workings, the essence of a functional esthetic is that the object visually mitigates between what it is and what we expect it to be. When we think of the capuccino method of brewing, we begin to see Noffke's funnel vessel as an erupting volcano. The heat source changes the contained water into violent steam that pushes against the outer skin described by the hammer marks. As it erupts, the dark liquid of coffee transformed in its bowels is forced upward, through the long tortuous spout, seeking release. As the coffee drips from the spout, there is a sense of elation in the success of the almost miraculous transubstantiation, like those crude though delectable drops of moonshine. Where other capuccino steamers seek to calm the user through their design, hiding the violent process in either delicate harmony or in the confidence of rational design, Noffke's steamer is a dramatic statement that is personally interpretive, evocative and does not sacrifice its utility. He has accomplished so much with so little; therein lies his esthetic.

Noffke's objects are bound by process and the social relevance that evolves from the appreciation of the maker's labor and the object's utility. These objects are at once simply made yet operate with complex associations, suggesting a philosophy that does not consider either mutually exclusive. Noffke's objects are patterned after natural and familiar things, like vessels and utensils. Yet, something comes into existence, almost blindly, through the fierce throes of his labor, bearing the marks of his exposed and threatened culture. No sooner than the work is finished, or unfinished, it takes its place amongst the other things of our material world; assuming indifference and dignity, they take on an aura of permanence and melancholy consent.[3]

Notes

1. Patrick Heron, "Submerged Rhythm," *The Changing Forms of Art*, New York, 1955.
2. Jules David Prown, "Style as Evidence," Winterthur Portfolio 15, 1980.
3. This sentiment was expressed by by Rainer Maria Rilke upon observing the working method of Rodin in the *Rodin–Book: First Part*, 1903.

Michael Dunas writes on craft, art and design.

Above: *Braille Cup*, fabricated, keyed sterling silver, repoussé drawings (raised dots on surface), 4 x 2½"; **left:** *Billy Pot*, keyed fine silver with titanium bail, 5 x 6", c. 1982; **opposite page:** *Cappucino Steamer*, fine silver with elements, 11 x 10 x 6", 1984. Photo: Wagle/Gehrke; **inset:** *Copper Steamer*, fabricated, sterling silver tip, brass fittings with stick blowout, c. 1982. Photos: courtesy the artist

KAI CHAN

Lines of Communication

by Diana Reitberger

Coming to terms with the work of Kai Chan is not so much a matter of definition as of communication. As Chan explains, "When I work on my pieces, I put things, anything—materials thoughts, accidents—together to become an object that reflects the dialogues of the materials and myself."[1] Whether a neckpiece of cinnamon held together with elastic bands, or a freestanding bamboo structure, Chan's materials and their freedom in space demand an intimate solitude for full appreciation of their layers of experience.

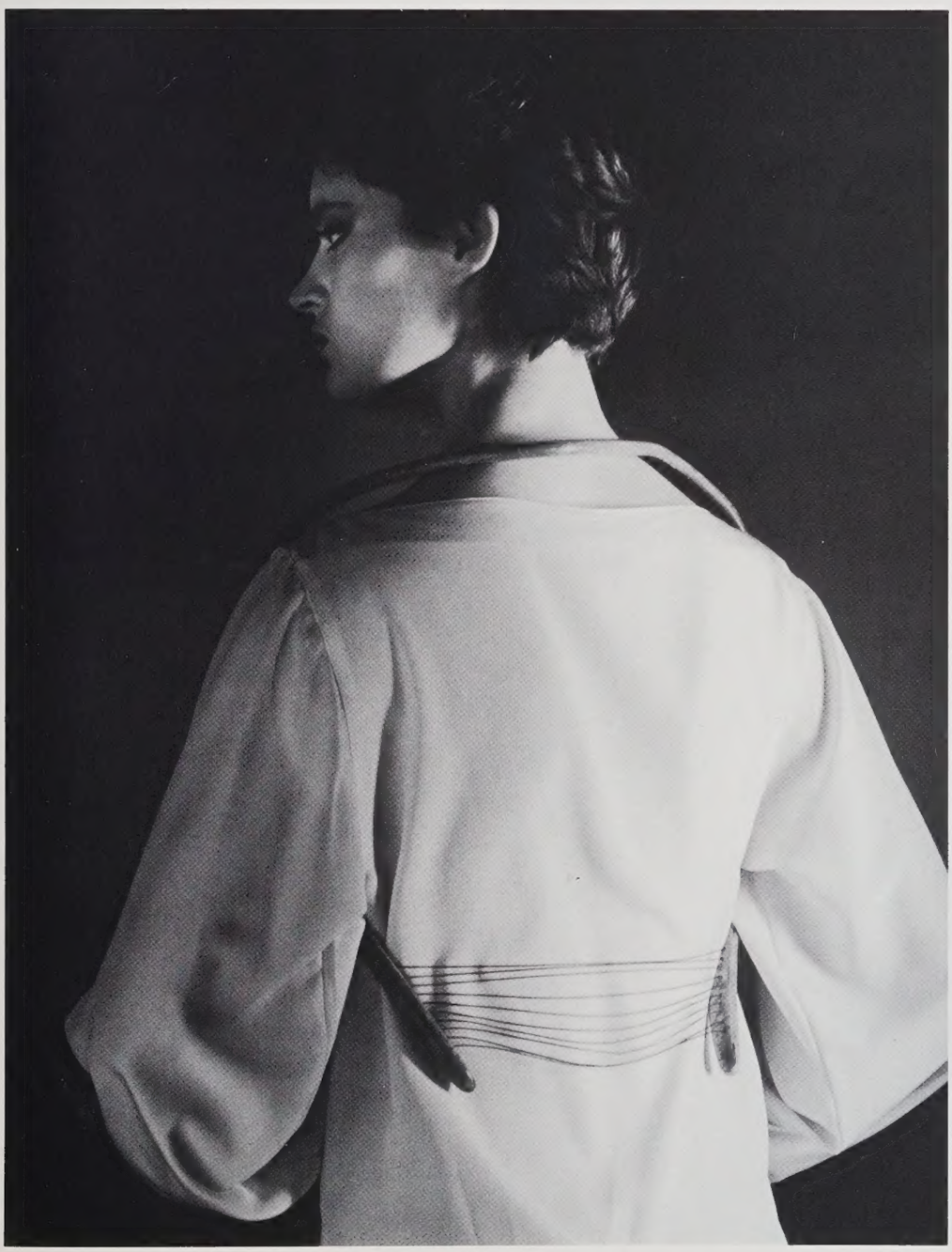
Born in rural Sechuan, China, Chan left the mainland at age nine for Hong Kong, where he went on to obtain a degree in biology at the university. However, it was not until he arrived in Canada in 1966 to study interior design at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto that he was introduced to contemporary painting and sculpture. Upon graduation, Chan divided his time between the position of set designer for Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille and a commercial interior designer.

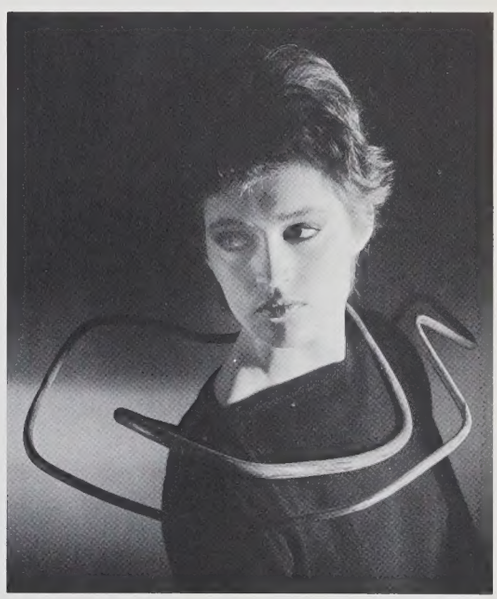
In 1969 Chan was introduced to fiber art and the "art fabric" installations of Sheila Hicks while viewing the exhibition "Wall Hangings" at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In these formative influences one can see the points of departure from which Chan shapes his lines of communication. There is an interrelationship between fiber, theatre and design as well as material, improvisation and space.

Within a short span of five years, Kai Chan has become a leading creative force in the realm of what Ralph Turner and Peter Dormer in their book *The New Jewelry* define as "Jewelry as Theatre."

Chan has said, "My artistic investigation began with an attempt to understand space; not as a void but as a visual field. Through the process of using materials I began to observe the perception of space. It is perception that determines space. And perception is affected by the presence of forms and materials."[2] This philosophy is most apparent in *Between the Lights*, 1985. In this piece, palm leaves have been attached to a cotton core to form two cuffs for the arms. The leaves radiate and animate the surrounding space. Bursts of bright primary color have been painted on one surface, offering an interesting play of light and shadow when the piece is worn.

Chan's materials of choice include rattan, bamboo, dogwood and palm leaves, admired for both their tactility and natural patina. They also become points of departure, in many cases natural imperfections dictating the direction a specific body sculpture will take. His choice of materials is also a natural extension of the calligraphic nature of many pieces. the materials commonly used as tools in Eastern writing ultimately become the language themselves in Chan's hands. There is also a closer link with his personal history, as resilient household utensils were made of bamboo and/or rattan in southeastern





Opposite page: *Night Lines*, bamboo, silk, dye, wax, 1984; **left:** *Neck Harp*, rattan, wood, polyester, dye, wax, 1985; **top:** *Between the Lights*, palm leaf, cotton, mixed threads, acrylic paint, 1985; **above:** *South Sea Blue*, rattan, dye, wax. Photos: John Dean

China.[3] There is also the poetic process of natural selection. To borrow from Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese sage, "Be at one with all these living things, which have arisen and flourished, return to the quiet whence they came, like a healthy growth of vegetation, falling back upon the root."[4]

For Chan, the creation of a piece takes on an evolutionary flow, beyond material to movement and bodily interaction. Using his body as the template, he manipulates his materials, constantly trying on the piece and making adjustments. Chan first created his pieces on a whim for a party, and he attempts to recreate this easy dialogue to this day.

Chan seeks to infuse his work with the creative spirit, ultimately passing it on to both wearer and observer. In addition, each piece is constructed to provide a wide range of functional possibilities, not only to reflect the wearer's personality but also to allow for physical interaction with the work. In this respect, Chan is able to convey the essence of what jewelry is—an intimate, portable art.

It is with this point of wearability that one perceives the intrinsic change in Chan's attitude. Whereas the first pieces were produced as show pieces with a nod to drama, he is now concerned with how the person actually wearing the piece thinks about it. Above all, Chan would like his work to be a catalyst, enticing the wearer to put it on and have fun with it. After all, as he says, "You're not wearing the crown jewels of England!"

The pieces that invite manipulation are structurally complex. A prime example is *Sparkle-Bead-Red* from 1985. With its combination of rattan and bamboo loops and coconut beads, a number of variations can be achieved. In addition, the beads glide along the rattan, much like playing on an abacus. Chan's intent is clear, "When you go to the beach and find a beautiful shell, you will pick it up and examine it, play with it, with your fingers, your lips, your ears, nose, your shoulder and your body; you will kiss it, blow air into it, catch it in the air, say a few intimate words to it, and show it to your friends. . . . I would like this piece to inspire the same feeling from you."[5]

Chan has attempted this type of complexity with other materials for more control in variation. A number of "spirals" were executed in papier mâché using a wire frame. Chan actively experimented with this material, mainly for the "springiness" of the shape. The pieces composed of a single strand of rattan sensuously curve over a shoulder, flow with the line of the collarbone or loop over an arm, punctuated by a seemingly effortless flow, back and forth over the body. The lucid landscape imagery of *South-Sea-Blue* captures this essence as it envelopes the body in an aura of shimmering blue.

Chan has also experimented with rattan constructions that are more preordained in shape and dictate how they are to be worn. One striking example is *Neck Harp,* in which a curve of rattan tightly encircles the body in a confining configuration, although not necessarily restricting movement. Chan's

Left: *Sparkle-Bead-Red,* wood, rattan, bamboo, coconut bead, dye, 1985. Photo: John Dean; **above:** *Cocktail Fence,* bamboo, string, 1985; **opposite page:** *Shelters,* bamboo, dye, wood, 1985. Photos: Kai Chan

personal metaphors are the result of a reduction of basic visual elements, be it a landscape, chair or harp. In this respect, he greatly admires the work of Pierre Degen, one of Britain's leading proponents of the "new jewelry," who has removed the traditional limitations of scale and function.

This international influence is evident in Chan's work. Through participation in international shows, he has been influenced and conversely has influenced the contemporary jewelry movement. One international jeweler who has inspired Chan is Otto Künzli. Known for his mannered flaunting of the rules of personal adornment, Künzli has made strong wood pieces that have inspired Chan to comment, "If a woman will wear a diamond, why not wood?"

Color plays an intrinsic role in each piece that Chan creates. It serves not only to enhance the form, but to underline the movement of the piece. While Chan may choose to paint directly onto a work, he has turned increasingly toward using wax and dyes, much like batiking wood. The coloring, however, is never precious.

Another trend emerging from Chan's work is the natural progression from body sculpture to a more formalized freestanding sculpture. All of his works can be hung on the wall or placed on a surface and still successfully animate their surrounding space, yet he has recently begun to separate specific work from the context of body sculpture, most evident with a five-part, site-specific piece at his first solo exhibition at the Ontario Crafts Council this year.

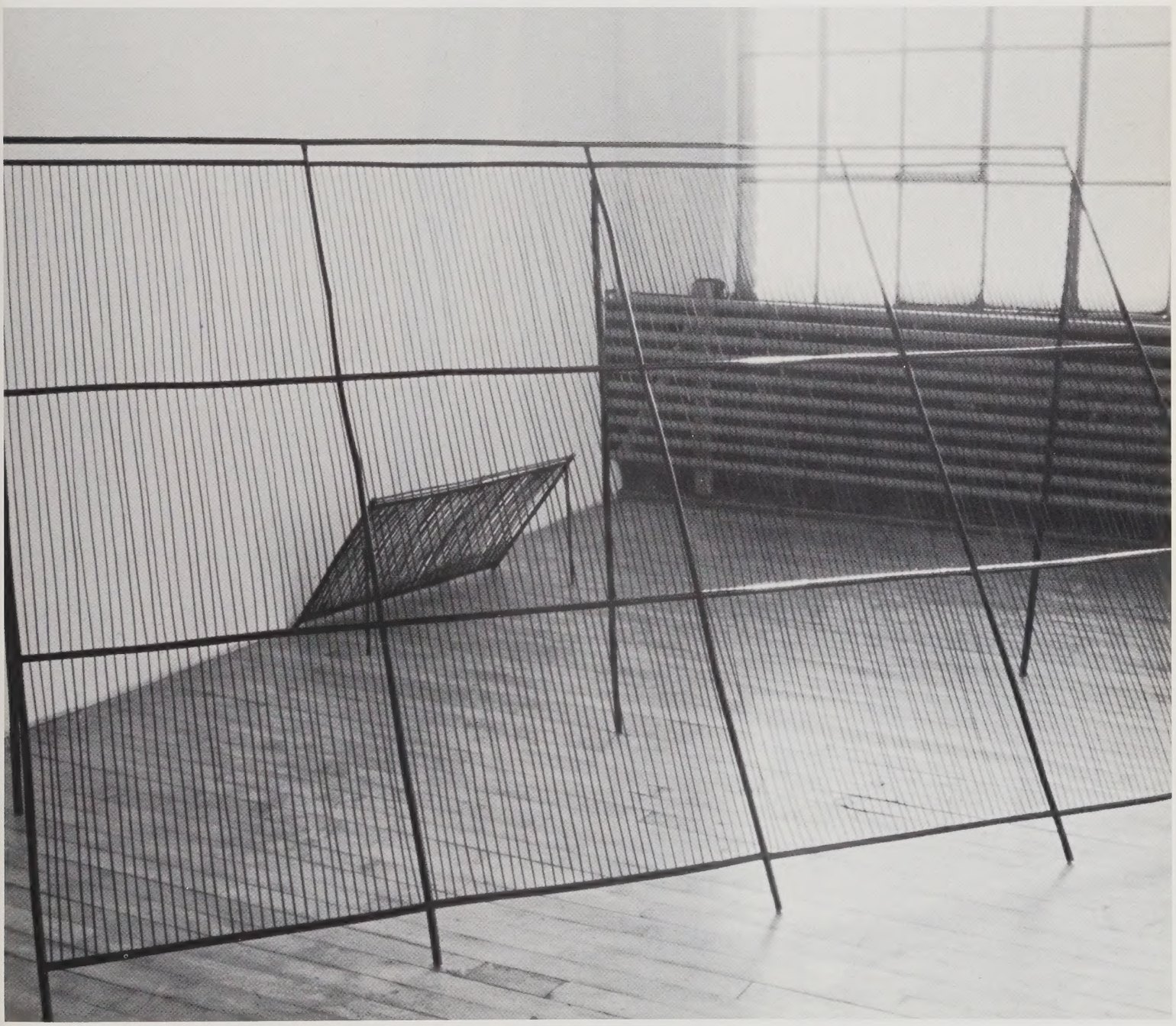
Important in this progression were *Night Lines*, 1984, a triangular construction of bamboo and silk, which foreshadowed a piece in the show entitled *Shelters*, and *Cocktail Fence*, 1985, a witty piece directly akin to Pierre Degen's *Ladder Piece and Balloon* from 1983.

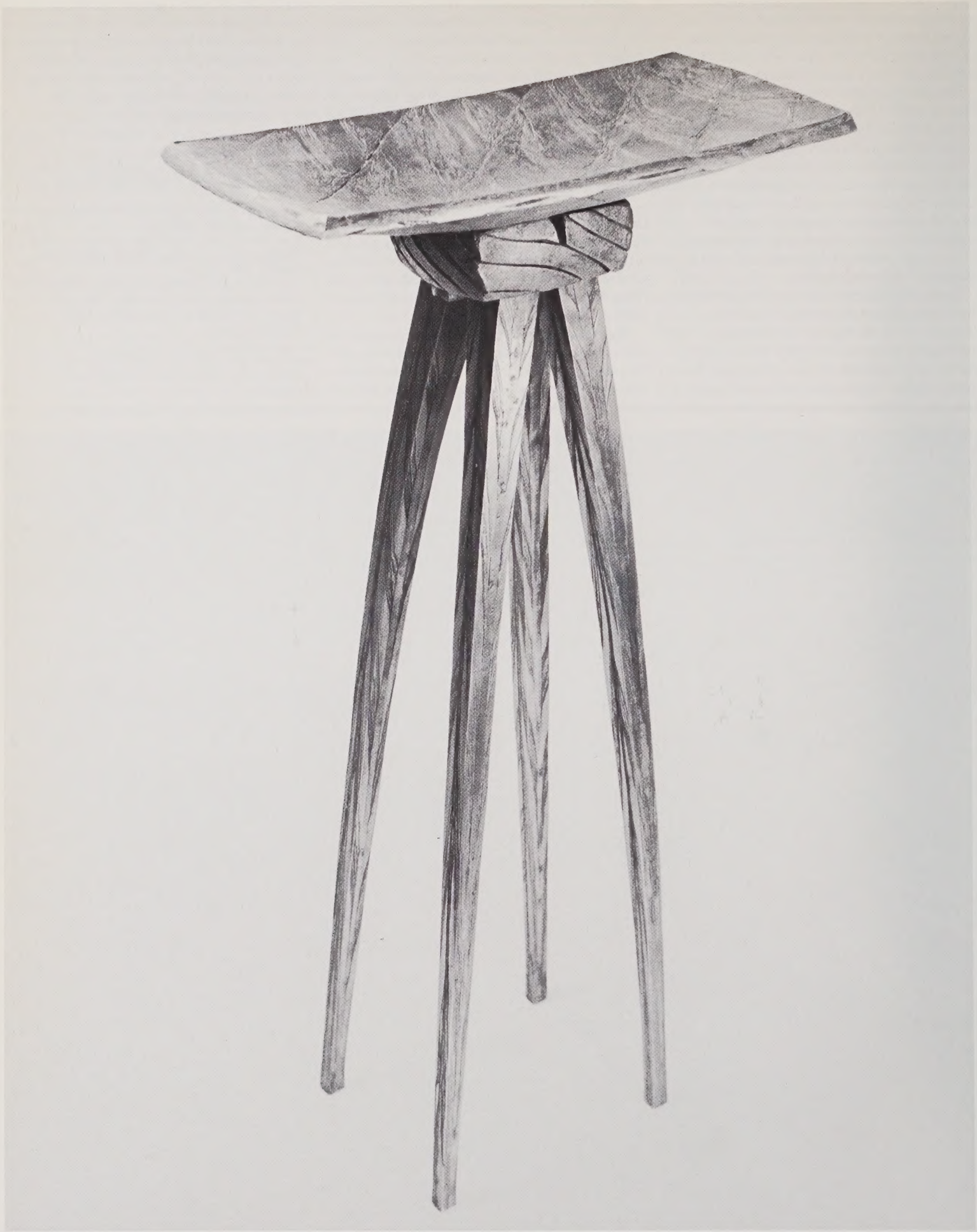
Beginning with an exploration of nontraditional materials, Chan has pursued a flexible path in the discovery of possibilities for shape, color and space. His distinctive and calligraphic explorations in space continue to activate and stimulate lively discussion around the definition of jewelry and its expanding parameters. Above all, Chan maintains a quiet integrity and personal joy in animating the lives of others: "My work is: a pet, a toy, a friend, a mask, a memory, a fantasy, a dream, a landscape, a flower, a taboo, a smile, a story, a lie."[6]

Notes

1. "Gesture & Form: The Engimatic Objects of Kai Chan," Helen Duffy, *Ontario Craft*, Fall, 1984, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 14.
2. *Kai Chan: New Works*, Alan Elder, Ontario Crafts Council, Toronto, 1987, p. 3.
3. *Body Work: A Selection of Contemporary Canadian Jewellery*, Nancy Tousley, Alberta College of Art Gallery, 1985, p. 16.
4. *The Way of Life According to Lao Tzu*, translated by Witter Bynner, Capricorn Books, 1962, p. 25.
5. *10 Jaar Ra*, Paul Derrez, Amsterdam, 1986.
6. *Body Work*, p. 16.

Diana Reitberger is Director of Fundraising at the Art Gallery of Ontario and a collector of crafts and photography.





David Secrest, *Dish on Legs,* forged mild steel, pattern welded steel, 30" h., 1985. Photo: F. Jack Hurley

DAMASCUS AND PATTERN WELDING

by Adam Smith

True "damascus" steel is made by a casting process utilizing very high carbon steel. The material is held at or near the temperature of fusion for an extended period of time. This causes the formation of large, high carbon dendrites in a matrix of approximately eutectoid steel. This is a process of growing crystals in the molten metal, and no welding is involved. This material, called "wootz," is used in the traditional Persian blades of Indian steel, to which the trade in Damascus gave its name. The term Damascus is incorrectly applied to the welded, patterned steels that have become common in North American cutlery during the last decade. To try and encourage the distinction between the two processes, I term the welded metal "pattern welded," and I would like to encourage the use of this term. It may seem a small point, but smiths have been "rediscovering" the "lost secret of Damascus" for nearly 200 years. This distinction has caused confusion in every generation of metalsmiths since.

Pattern welding is the process of welding together plates of high, low and sometimes intermediate carbon content steels, drawing them out, cutting and rewelding repeatedly until the desired fineness of material distribution is achieved. The number of layers increases nearly exponentially with the number of welds. However, some material is lost from the surface due to firescale and surface cleaning processes. I was originally attracted to this process partly by the mythology that has grown up around it and partly for esthetic reasons. On the practical side, much has been claimed for the material with regards to its edge-holding ability ("the sword that never dulls"), cutting ability, toughness and strength. While it is true that combining billets of different compositions can produce a blade that is excellent in each of these categories, I have come to believe that the performance of pattern welded material can be equalled or surpassed by the best of the modern homogeneous tool steels, even without taking into consideration their functional advantage of stain resistance.

Pattern welding for me addresses the issue of the static and formal effect produced by mirror and brushed finishes, which I feel sacrifices the vitality of the objects to perfectionism and concerns of detail. At the same time, I reject deliberate roughness of technique, feeling that that approach can produce only a hollow mockery of the vital workmanship of the medieval craftsman, whose rough work reflected his rough working conditions and demands for production. Pattern welding offers a middle way out of the dichotomy between rigorous development of detail and warmth and vitality of the object.

Forge Welding

The bonds in pattern welded steel are solid state welds made in the forge; that is, welds made below the temperature of fusion. The plates are heated to increase deformability of the material, allowing them to conform to each other very closely under the pressure of the hammer. The heat also has the effect of increasing the rate and amplitude of molecular vibration (this is what heat is). The combination of these two effects bring the plates to within intermolecular distances. As soon as two molecules have been brought sufficiently close together, interatomic bonds (shared electrons) form, making the two molecules effectively one piece of material. The percentage of molecular bonds across the weld interface compared to the number of bonds in the parent metal determines the strength of the weld relative to the strength of the material. It is possible with some types of solid state welding, particularly explosive welding, to make a welded joint stronger than the parent metals due to work hardening of themetal at the interface.

A weld automatically forms when you achieve interatomic proximity between two pieces of metal. The chief barrier is the presence of contaminants between the two plates. In addition to loose dirt, which may be physically removed, oxides and silicates are present, which form a thin, tenacious layer bonded to the surface of the metal. These metals are coated with a flux, often anhydrous borax, but possibly borax and sand, or borax and clay, mixtures. The purpose of the flux is to reduce the melting point of the contaminants so that they become liquid well below the temperature of fusion of the metal. This allows the oxide flux mixture to be driven out of the joint by the force of the hammer blows, making possible the intimate contact required for the success of the joint. The flux also acts to protect the metal surface from loss of carbon. The clay/straw fluxes used by the Japanese smiths seem to serve this purpose better than the straight anhydrous borax, and for this reason are recommended during the drawing-out heats between welds. I do not feel that any advantage is attained by the introduction of iron filings in the flux.

The theory outlined above would lead one to believe that there is no critical temperature below which it is impossible to get a weld and above which a weld is certain. The success of the weld depends on the conditon of the metal surface and the amount of pressure. I have succeeded in obtaining a high-quality weld by hammering two abrasively cleaned steel plates (one mild, one 1095) in an airtight wrap of "ticronic" foil, at a temperature of 2000°F. Ticronic foil is a commercial heat-treating foil. Check your *Yellow Pages* under "Heat Treating Supplies" for sources. This is about 250-300°F less than the temperature necessary for a conventional forge weld. It is common industrial practice to produce high-quality welds between dissimilar metals by heating and pressing thoroughly cleaned parts in a high-vacuum furnace. The procedure is known as diffusion welding. In this case, the metallic atoms actually diffuse across the weld interface.

A Procedure for Pattern Welding

A number of plates of mild and high carbon steel are cleaned by abrasive cleaning (this cleaning while not strictly necessary is desirable). The plates are bevelled slightly on the ends, then tack welded together on one end with an oxyacetylene torch. Welding on one end allows any slag or impurities to be driven out the opposite end of the stack. A handle of ½" mild steel is welded to the plates. This involves welding to weld metal. This produces a weak bond which must often be redone later in the process. The plates are heated in the forge to about 1300°F (dull red) and then sprinkled with anhydrous borax. The plates are then replaced in the forge and heated slowly with a reducing flame (or with very light blast in a solid fuel forge). Normally, the outside plates heat more quickly than those on the inside. This seldom presents a problem with a gas forge. The temperature will not usually come up to the "burning" temperature of the metal. In solid fuel forges, this risk should be dealt with by heating as slowly as possible, bringing the forge to welding heat at the same time as the inner layers of metal.

Observing the Process

The outside plates glow a dull yellow (observed through oxyacetylene welding goggles to avoid eye damage) fairly quickly. The color progresses inwards towards the center plates. As the lamina-

tion reaches dull yellow, the flux begins to bubble violently and flows with about the same viscosity as light oil. Gradually you will see the billet brighten, but the color change is small. Normally, the furnace wall heats up much more quickly than the billet does, so a comparison of colors will give an indication of the heat in the billet. During the first heat, it is difficult to know exactly when welding temperature has been achieved because there is no firescale present. When the bright yellow billet increases in incandescence, it is ready to weld. If you wait too long, a very tenacious oxide will gradually form, which is difficult to deal with in subsequent steps.

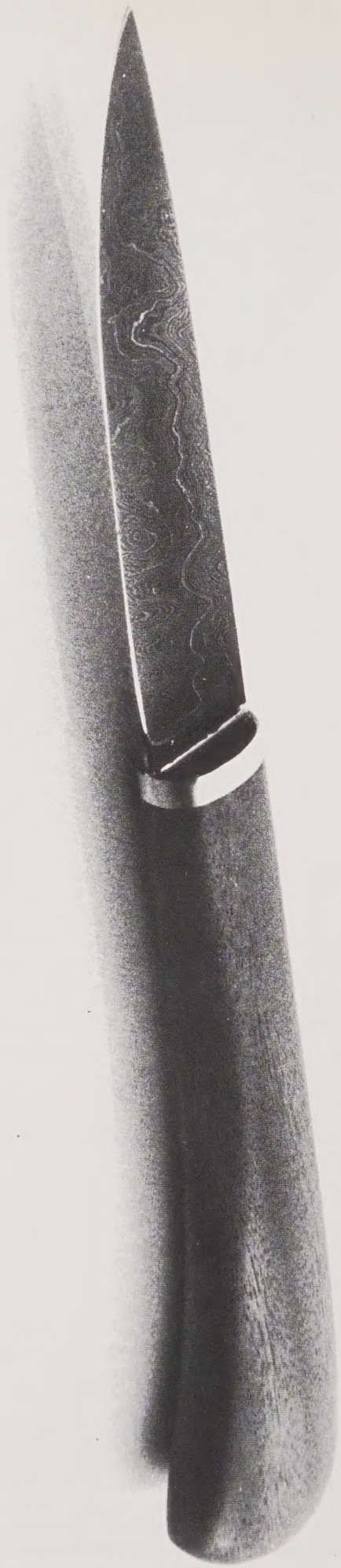
Hammering proceeds from the handle to the center and then to the edges. You are forcing the liquid impurities outwards towards the edges of the billet. It is important not to trap them inside the billet. You will often produce a sound weld everywhere but on the bottom plate. This is caused by rapid heat transfer to the anvil. It is a good idea during your initial forging of a billet to take a welding heat on one side and then the next one on the opposite side. During the second heat, there is firescale on the billet, which helps in gauging temperature (although not in getting the weld). Disregard the flux bubbling; pick a bit of firescale to watch. When the firescale bubbles, you know that the impurities have gone liquid and it is safe to weld.

The soundness of the weld can be estimated by looking at the edge of the billet after heating. If the color is even through the billet, the welds are sound. Sharp lines of color contrast represent weak welds because the heat will not travel as easily across a tightly shut void as it will across a weld. When you have sound welds throughout the billet (three or four heats), it is time to draw the billet out. The drawing-out process consists of hammering the orange-hot billet until it is about half its original thickness. Be careful not to heat the metal above dull yellow heat, as this can cause surface cracking due to the relatively high carbon content in 1095. The metal may be either lengthened or widened in drawing. The Japanese practice is to alternate the two. In either case, during the last heat, flux and clean off the firescale from one flat face and forge with that face against the anvil. This face will form the inside in the next weld. This makes grinding the weld face clean much easier. In drawing out, avoid unnecessary hammering on the side faces of the billet.

After the billet is drawn out, one face is cleaned and it is cut part way through from the rough face, leaving about 1/16″ of metal. The 1/16″ metal left after the cut acts as a hinge in the folding. The next weld may then take place after fluxing, folding and heating the billet. The above process is repeated as necessary to obtain the desired number of layers. The theoretical rate of increase is as follows: 1st weld, 4; 2nd, 7; 3rd, 13; 4th, 25; 5th, 49; 6th, 97; 7th, 193; etc. These figures overestimate the actual number of layers accumulated in practice, since there are losses with each weld from scaling and cleaning.

Creating the Pattern

With fine material, the billet may simply be forged, ground and polished without any attempt at artificial pattern generation. To my mind, this method creates the most beautiful patterns in the object. It normally produces a gently varying wood grain known as *itame*.



An artificial wood-grain pattern known as *mokume* may be created by dimpling the article with a ball peen hammer in final forging before grinding and polishing. This pattern can be made more random and lively by doing so on the weld face prior to cleaning during the preparations for each weld. *Mesame* or line grain is formed either by grinding the billet on a bias or by forging the billet on the bias, then grinding flat the plane thus formed. *Ayasugi-hada*, or curly grain, is produced by incising the billet in straight, perpendicular lines, then forging the billet flat. The Japanese disapprove of this grain for a working sword, feeling that it weakens the metal.

Finishing

After the desired grain is formed and the billet has been forged, filed and ground to size, the piece must be treated to render the pattern visible. In the Western tradition, this is normally done by polishing, cleaning and etching. I have used 10% sulphuric, concentrated muriatic and 5–10% ferric chloride solutions. These may be used alone or in sequence. I usually finish with ferric chloride. It creates differential coloring where the others merely produce a difference in level. It is tempting to stop polishing prematurely, telling yourself that the scratches will etch out. They won't, so produce as clean a surface as you can before etching unless you want the look of a scratchy/etched surface.

In etching the work, one is taking advantage of the faster and darker etch experienced in cutting martensite crystals (the structure of hardened, tempered high carbon steel) compared with the effect of the mordant on the ferritic/pearlitic structure found in mild steel. In the Japanese techniques, it is simply differences in hardness that are being shown up. In both cases, it is necessary to harden and temper the article before polishing and surface treatment in order to get a clearly visible grain.

The Japanese look down on "chemical polishing" and reveal the grain in their swords entirely by mechanical polishing. They might begin with a soft, large-grained (approximately 1000) abrasive on a hard back, followed by a final polish with a fine, hard abrasive on a soft back. For this final step, the wet powder grit may be used on the pads of the thumbs. The process produces a glossy finish that shows the grain quite clearly. The finish is beautiful but tends to be a bit subtle for Western-style work, which is seldom the object of deliberate contemplation.

Adam Smith has been a working knifemaker since 1975. He is currently president of the Ontario Crafts Council.

Adam Smith, *Utility Knife*, pattern welded blade with pink ivorywood handle, 1984. Photo: the maker

L E T T E R S

Many letters received are of interest to the entire readership. Unless stated otherwise, all letters received may be included in the "Letters" section. Address letters to: Sarah Bodine, Editor, Metalsmith, *1 Penn Lyle Rd., Princeton Jct., NJ 08550. Letters should be signed and a return address given. The editors reserve the right to edit for publication.*

Dear Editor:
I heard that *Metalsmith* had difficulty finding a writer interested in reviewing "Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical." Perhaps the writers approached felt that, with the incredible amount of previously published comment on the show, nothing intelligent was left to say. Michael Dunas's review (Summer 87, p. 48) certainly lends credence to this hypothesis.

But criticism is the statement of opinion, as is curatorial viewpoint. One may agree or disagree with either, and any resulting dialogue is normally healthy. However, criticism of the Dunas ilk always seems to cross the line between comment and contempt, as it does here with the sarcastic roster of aritsts and the tasteless and inappropriate editorial placement of the announcement of Paul Smith's pending retirement.

The American Craft Council runs four major programs: the museum, the magazine, the library and the craft markets. Each program has its individual staff and budget, and specific objectives, goals and constituencies, which are not always the same. It is inaccurate to confuse their individual missions when speaking of the Council as a whole, as Dunas does. The "separation of selling and scholarship" is built into the very organizational structure of the Council. We can, I think, walk and chew gum at the same time. If Dunas were as familiar with the American Craft Council as he presents himself to be, he would know that American Craft Enterprises has contributed less than one percent of the Council's total support revenue over the last five years. While the Council is proud of the fact that ACE is "a major force in the marketing of crafts" (which is what it's supposed to be), ACE does not serve as a major source of income to the Council.

The field of crafts has grown and changed dramatically in recent years, and the world of 1987 is certainly very different from the one that shaped Aileen Webb's vision in the first half of this century. As the Council plans for its second 45 years, it does so with vast new audiences and exciting new vigor: a new executive director, a new museum, a new museum director, a new librarian, a redesigned and expanded magazine, new locations and concepts for craft markets and a balanced budget, up 64% in less than five years.

And, as the Council reviews and restates its mission in relation to a maturing field, it does so without apology for its leadership position or the mostly fulfilled vision of Mrs. Webb, with pride in its accomplishments, a respect for its history and traditions and great enthusiasm for the future, not assuming the support of anyone, but working hard to continue to deserve the support of so many.
—*William Grenewald,* Executive Director,
American Craft Council

Michael Dunas replies:
Mr. Grenewald accuses me of criticism that "seems to cross the line between comment and contempt." If by contempt, he means the feeling with which one regards anything worthless, then I plead innocent, since I would not have written my review if I did not consider the inaugural exhibition worthy of comment. Negative criticism often elicits an emotional response, a cry of "contemptible!", from those who feel unduly slighted. Understandable as this reaction might be, invectives add little to the discussion of the valid issues raised by criticism. If, however, he means by contempt, a disrespect for a court or legislative body, then I plead guilty, since contempt of authority is a matter of another sort. If Mr. Grenewald claims that the ACC speaks for craftspeople, as the institutional representative of this community, then I challenge this assumption and Mr. Grenewald has just cause to call my criticism in contempt.

Mr. Grenewald apparently holds this latter position, since the substance of his letter defends the organization of the Council, its divisions and their specific objectives and constituencies "which are not always the same." My review was specifically directed toward the museum and the inaugural show, and while I believe it would have been more appropriate for Paul Smith to respond to criticism over curatorial direction, Mr. Grenewald as executive director of the ACC felt the need to respond. Apparently, my criticism of the museum unduly implicated the Council and it was "inaccurate to confuse their individual missions." But, the museum, one of four major ACC programs is inextricably bound to the other three, and it is naive to think they don't share the same philosophy. A show like "Poetry of the Physical" perpetuates a rather limited notion of craft as a commodity for middle- and upper-class consumers in search for something unique, not only in its installation but also in the catalog essay and press material that proffers the value of a "new professional" motivated by careerism and changing market conditions. A show like "Poetry of the Physical" raises the question of why does the museum maintain such a narrow "idea of craft" and where does this idea come from? When you consider the early efforts of Mrs. Webb to train backwoods craftsmen for NY markets, the contemporary success of the ACE and the commercialization of *American Craft,* there is a consistent "idea of craft" that historically has run throughout the divisions of the ACC. Most recently, the ACC's "idea of craft" was spotlighted by the "high-end" boutique approach to the Armory Show that followed on the heels of and capitalized on the "Poetry of the Physical."

Why be so concerned by this cofluence of philosophies? Well, we expect something more from our craft museum than a new building that serves as a showcase. The essence of a museum is more than just a building; it is a permanent collection; it is scholarship; it is an educational program; it is publications and curatorial acumen, all of which, in my opinion, have been sorely lacking throughout the history of the ACM. It appears to me that the museum and its programs are constrained by the market-oriented philosophy of the Council. There is no indication that there will be a concerted effort to conserve and study the history of contemporary craft, validated by research and scholarship. While it is commendable that the ACE has been successful in marketing crafts, the promotional posture of the museum seriously questions the valid "separation of selling the scholarship" that in the long run impedes progress in the recognition of crafts as the esthetic equal of the fine and decorative arts.

We do not need any more vacuous rhetoric about "vast new audiences and exciting new vigor," new personnel, new museum, redesigned magazine, "new locations and concepts for craft markets." What we need to know is whether the Council's current vision differs any from Mrs. Webb's, whether the "idea of craft" as a handmade commodity is still the driving force in the Council's activities. We are waiting for the Council to "restate its mission to a maturing field."

Finally, I wish to address Mr. Grenewald's mention of my "sarcastic roster of artists." I intended to be sarcastic to call attention to the fact that these artists wittingly or unwittingly have validated the Council's "idea of craft" through their participation in the show. I have admired many of these artists personally and professionally and my comments were offered with no disrespect to their character nor their work, but in order to improve public perception artists must address the way their institutions represent them. It is not enough that an "idea of craft" is communicated in the artist's own work, he or she must be concerned with how it is "stamped" in public presentation. I am appealing to each artist to take individual responsibility, to work for change within established institutions or, if necessary from without.

Dear Editor:
I found the approach Michael Dunas took in reviewing the American Craft Museum's "Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical" provocative. Having read the reviews of the show in *The New York Times, New Art Examiner, Time, Ornament* and British *Crafts,* I was glad to see an article that focused on issues other than the ever-present yet insolvable problem of art versus craft. His point of view raises some important questions that need to be addressed.
—*Marjorie Schick,* Pittsburg, KS

Reviews

Holloware '87: A National Juried Exhibition of Holloware Made Primarily of Metal

Tower Fine Arts Gallery, SUNY, Brockport, NY
March 1-April 12, 1987

Tyler Art Gallery, SUNY, Oswego, NY
September 9-October 11, 1987

Roland Gibson Gallery, SUNY, Potsdam, NY
December 6-January 22, 1988

by Susan Dodge Peters

Three years ago Jamie Bennett mourned the state of contemporary American holloware ("American Holloware," *Metalsmith* Summer 1984). Ideas that had shaped and invigorated holloware design in the 1940s—Scandinavian influences, architectural and natural sources, traditional holloware forms—had withered, Bennett observed, to empty imitation by the 1970s.

The real loss, Bennett wrote, was the artist's own honesty and integrity. "There must be honesty in the making of an art object, whether it is a painting, a building, a ceramic bowl or a metal vessel. Honesty is an act of awareness and a willingness to take risks in presenting a point of view." This lack of esthetic honesty meant that metalsmiths allowed a generation to pass by unrecorded: "Somewhere during the last 20 years we have let pass the opportunity to clearly represent our time and our world view."

Now, less than three years later, there is evidence that Bennett's articulate but grim assessment of contemporary American holloware no longer holds true. Whether Bennett's painful and yet truthful collaring of the situation in contemporary holloware had a salutary effect or whether he spoke of the situation just as it naturally reached the bottom of its own internal cycle is impossible to know. But something new is stirring in the field.

News of the resurgence in holloware has come via an exhibition "Holloware '87." Organized by SUNY College at Brockport, "Holloware '87" was a national juried exhibition of holloware. As defined in the exhibition's prospectus, any work made in the past two years primarily of metal, derived from the vessel form, would be eligible. Functional as well as nonfunctional work, one-of-a-kind pieces as well as production work were all included in this definition.

Anna Callouri Holcombe, Galleries Director, SUNY College at Brockport, in consultation with Thomas Markusen, metalsmith and chairman of the art department, organized the show. Thomas Markusen has sponsored four national exhibitions of contemporary metalwork at SUNY College at Brockport over the past 16 years. The first of these shows, "Holloware '71," was an invitational, the most recent, "Holloware '87," was a juried show. Joining Markusen as judges for "Holloware '87" were Randy Long, from Indiana University, and Jamie Bennett, from SUNY College at New Paltz. 100 artists submitted slides of their work and 34 artists were selected, 11 of whom were represented by two pieces.

"Holloware '87" doesn't lend itself easily to critical commentary. Tempting though it might have been to steer this field in a specific direction by means of their selection, the jurors chose a show that reflects the diversity in holloware today. Individual energy and invention, not movements and trends, were the points of this show.

On several accounts, "Holloware '87" is a broad sampling of work in contemporary holloware. Included, for example, are metalsmiths at various stages in their careers, ranging from well-established artists such as Bruce Metcalf and Helen Shirk, to student work—mostly graduate students—from across the country. Concern seems to have been taken to represent metalsmiths who work within university settings as well as those who are self-employed. Interestingly, the number of the metalsmiths in each category was the same.

Difficult though it is to summarize the characteristics of this show, a number of identifiable changes have taken place in holloware in recent years. In his catalog statement, which compares this show with "Holloware '71," Thomas Markusen notes changes in materials, particularly the move from silver to other metals, and the decreased emphasis on functional ware.

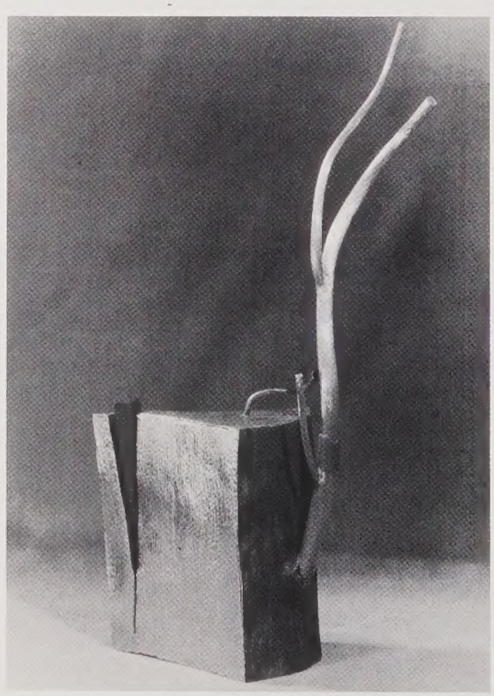
Artists are always working with and breaking from traditions, and during transitional periods this tendency may be especially marked. To underline that traditional holloware hasn't completely disappeared, the show includes Ron Brady's *Apple Blossom Bowl*, a piece made with classical silversmithing repoussé and chasing techniques. It was dated 1986 but could have been made two centuries ago. The other end of the spectrum was represented by Susan Hamlet's *Vessel Study #2*, also of 1986. Austere and intellectual, *Vessel #2* is a linear diagram of the outline of a vase, a Constructivist-inspired martini glasslike shape with a swizzle stick leaning against the rim.

Traditions are a satisfying starting point to begin looking at and thinking about works of art. The directions the artist took and the distances traveled are easier to follow. We can find all the elements of a water pitcher—body, spout, handle, lid—in Robin C. McGee's *Hewn Wood Water Pitcher*, 1985. An inventive of a traditional form, McGee's pitcher has been shaped and textured to look just like a wedge of wood. Driving an ebony wedge part way through the top of the "log", McGee formed pitcher's spout. A realistic looking twig, this one fabricated of metal, serves as the pitcher's handle and the handle for the lid is a bent nail.

Also successful at playing with tradition were Nancy Slagle's *Single Serving Teapot, 1986*, of sterling silver and Christina Baitz Brandewie's *Tea for Two*, 1986, of pewter and ivory. Slagle's teapot is a slim, rectangular box with a subtle serpentine curve that suggests a stylized human form. It looks, in fact, incredibly like a woman poised in the midst of a dance—the tango, perhaps—and the spout of the teapot, like the outstretched arm that leads the dancer forward, just into space. The handle is a simple arc that looks as if it were tracing an arm from the shoulder down to a hand on the hip.

Brandewie's *Tea for Two* also belongs within the scope of traditional holloware, with rounded Aladdin's-lamplike lines in the teapot. Two qualities of this tea service are particu-

Left: Nancy Slagle, *Single Serving Teapot*, sterling silver, constructed, 5½ x 4½ x 1½", 1986; **center:** Robin C. McGee, *Hewn Wood Water Pitcher*, fabricated and fused pewter, ebony, steel, 5 x 8 x 18", 1985; **right:** Susan Ewing, *Winged Creamers, One Camouflaged*, fabricated sheet metal with silver and 24k gold electroplating, 4½" h., 1986. Photo: Rick Potteiger



larly distinctive. The handles of the cups and teapot are solid, but gently concave so that the shadows cast by the handles suggest a depth and hollowness they do not actually have. The set is highly polished and satiny, and at first glance it is easy to mistake the pewter for sterling.

There is something undeniably elegant and intimate about domestic functional objects made in metal. Perhaps it is the preciousness of materials and smallness of scale, but these objects seem to license the imagination to put them to use. Susan Ewing's birdlike or angelesque, *Winged Creamers, One Camouflaged* beg to be held delicately between two fingers and poured, as does Thomas P. Muir's sleek, architectural coffeepot, *Cycladic Figure with his Hair in a Roller*. Lin Stanionis's two liqueur cups are obsessive, almost sinister in their tiny, meticulous and mysterious details. *Liqueur Cup #1*, which has a bulbous cup on top of striped stem that ends with a jagged tail, is disturbingly organic. Its tail, which is the base that supports the cup, is curiously like a crumpled insect's leg or a twisted snake's body. The thought of drinking from these cups is unsettling; surely they would transform the most innocent liquids into potions.

Because of the very nature of holloware, its functional orgins and its persistent reference to the vessel, with its functional overtones, even the most sculptural pieces in this show are tied to traditions, especially to vase and bowl forms. Susan Kingsley's *Neorococo Flowering Vase* is like a greatly enlarged blossom with exotic stamens and ruffled edges. Helen Shirk's *Vessel CV26E* is as geometric as Kingsley's vase is organic. Exploding from the top of Shirk's vase/vessel is a series of bisecting planes. Some of these planes are perforated, others solid, but the surfaces of the entire piece are covered with patina and oil pastel. The energetic, expressionistic vitality of the drawing instantly identifies this piece as dating from the mid-1980s.

On the cusp between the functional and the sculptural are such pieces as Lynn Hull's extremely simple *Ritual Bowl*, which has a mysterious hole in its center, ringed with black band, and Komelia H. Okim's large, enigmatic pieces in sterling silver. In Okim's work, which are among the most beautiful in the exhibition, strange concave forms that are part-boat, part-fish, part-moon float or are beached on the top of towers/islands.

Lisa Norton's two pitchers seem at first glance to qualify as functional objects, but the appearance is deceiving. Both Norton's pitchers are ultra-simple sheet metal cylindrical constructions with handles and spouts. Embossed on both are written messages such as: "Work out a simple, clear code of behavior. See that it is understood and stick to it."

Before the sheet metal was cut and fabricated into pitchers, Norton inked the metal sheets and printed them, and then included the resulting prints in the show. There is a disarmingly obvious quality about Norton's work. It is clearly and simply art about art, but because it dares to be so open about its intent, to be so clear and so simple, Norton's pitchers are among the most engaging pieces in the show.

Bruce Metcalf's work tests the limits of the show's definition of holloware, as metal is his primary material in idea, but not in physical amount, and his references to the vessel form are subtle. In his statement for the catalog, Metcalf describes both pieces as "sketches, assembled without plan from ordinary materials." Assembled in *Sketch 1985* are a small, painted-wood table, on top of which Metcalf has placed a carved firebrick vessel with a pewter scoop inside, suggesting perhaps a mortar and pestle.

Fish Tables are harder to see strictly within the definition and tradition of holloware. Metcalf has made two small wooden tables, which are less than a foot high, and placed sleek, Brancusi-esque pewter fish on top.

The meaning of these two pieces is elusive, and Metcalf intended them to be so: "I intended to make a poetic, undefinable and somewhat curious object. I enjoy these two pieces for their modesty and lack of ambition." Formally these two pieces do not command a tremendous amount of attention, but intellectually they do stick in the mind, touching big questions that are felt throughout the exhibition.

What, indeed, are the boundaries of holloware? How hollow is hollow enough to qualify as a vessel form? What about materials? As a term, holloware has been traditionally associated with silversmithing, and then, gradually with metalsmithing in general. In mixed media work, how much has to be metal for it to remain within the precinct of holloware? Is it the physical percentage of materials involved tha places Metcalf's work within the domain of holloware, versus woodwork, versus ceramics?

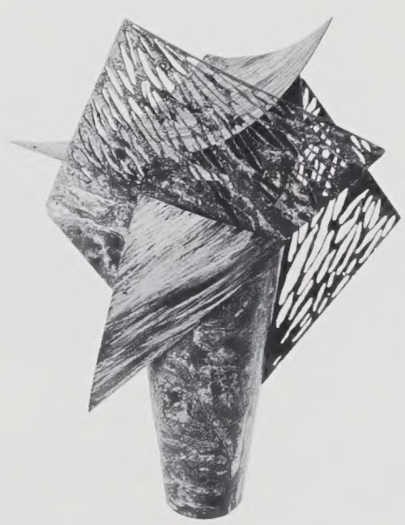
Such questions are exasperatingly petty and captivating in turn. Considering Metcalf's work in the broader category of sculpture, in which they clearly also belong, these questions are immaterial. Within the realm of crafts, though, they take on other meaning.

Holloware, as defined in the exhibition's prospectus and as explored by these 34 artists, is a broader field than it was in the past. The very flexibility of definition has encouraged, perhaps even permitted, the regeneration of this area of metalsmithing. But definitions to be useful must also be precise. There are without question innovative pieces in this show that fit within the traditional definition of holloware and yet are absolutely unique, utterly contemporary.

Whether or not Metcalf's work qualifies as holloware is an intriguing issue. On one level, one might wonder if Metcalf really belongs in this show. Did his stature in contemporary metalsmithing, more than the specific work itself, account for the inclusion of his work here? Did the jurors stretch the definition just for him? Or is Metcalf's challenging work here intentionally to force the issue of definition? As the most blatantly sculptural and thus the farthest removed from traditional holloware, Metcalf deals openly with ideas that are brewing behind the entire show.

For the individual work it includes, the artists it features and for the issues it raises, "Holloware '87 is an exciting exhibition, which proves that artists working with holloware are once again making honest contributions reflecting their own times and world views.

Left: Lin Stanionis, *Liqueur Cup #1*, raised, laminated, constructed, gold-plated, 6 x 2 x 1½", 1985; **center:** Komelia H. Okim, *Mid-Day II*, silver, shell forming and construction, 18 x 10½ x 4", 1985; **right:** Helen Shirk, *Vessel CV26E*, copper, patina, oil pastel, 16 x 12 x 8", 1986



Fashioned in Metal: Debra Chase

National Ornamental Metal Museum
April 5–May 31, 1987
by Linda Lindeen Raiteri

At the preview for her first solo exhibit, Rochester Institute of Technology graduate Debra Chase refused to sell her *Endangered Species Neckpiece*. She had fashioned this graceful ornament from the remains of a broken tortoise-shell haircomb, which she shaped to resemble dancing dolphins, and from pieces of whale ivory, fresh water pearl and sterling silver, which she shaped into two slumping bears. She would not sell the neckpiece because she will never be able to make another like it; she places a higher value on the lives of endangered than on what she may make of the remnants of their lives.

One does not expect this reverence for and celebration of life in an exhibit dominated by clothing made from stiff, transparent, anodized-aluminum screen. Yet there is grace and joy in every piece. Chase has chosen to use anodized screening because it allows her "to explore clothing as barrier, protector, and container; its transparency allows [her] to experiment with the way space is defined."

Evening Ensemble, a two-dimensional tuxedo and ball gown made of screening, plastic, paper and glass hangs against a wall waiting for a William Powell and a Myrna Loy to don the ensemble and go out for a night on the town.

Clothing, Chase says, "is a metaphor for our celebration of being human, our rights of passage, our definitions of ourselves." By creating sculptures of clothing that no one can wear, she feels she is making things that everyone can have.

Anyone can step, metaphorically, into the kinship of *Three Sisters*. The three suspended and slightly overlapping kimino shapes, each in a different mood, indicated by the different colored trim on the sleeves, recreate the closeness and the individuality of joined lives.

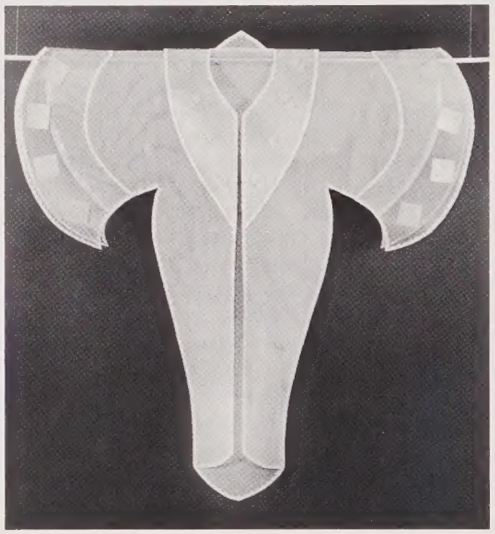
Since 1985, Chase's work has become three-dimensional, representing the life and/or life attitudes that can be donned, as clothing can be put on—clothing as container for, and perhaps manifestation of, the spirit. She recalls these sculptures *Life Jackets*

Shaped like *Happi Coats*, pieces such as *Aquarium Coat*, a cutout of a woman swimming through spirals of light within the three-dimensional container made of screen, or a cutout of a woman wearing a green leotard, holding a green apple within the jacket called *To Be In New York* represent moments in her life. The physical suspension of the cutouts echoes first, the buoyancy one feels in water and second, the perfect balance of a fine scale.

Four strapless dresses with bustles make up the series *New York Debutantes*. Within each dress, a woman is suspended. Each woman has a name and is painted in a characteristic outfit. Each gown is embroidered with symbols of the woman's interests and desires: cruise ships, fine wine, cats, birds, telephones. Each is a talisman for the woman, an affirmation and a celebration of the corresponding life.

In Chase's kimono-shaped *Spirit Coat*, one can best appreciate the qualities of her chosen material. Here, the strength and delicate transparency of the screen protect and expand the space surrounding the drifting shape of smoke, that represents the spirit within. *Spirit Coat* was completed days before this exhibit opened. With a dimming light shining on this piece, the spirit suspended within the *Life Jacket* disappears.

There is a story here, a magical tale, as in every piece in this exhibit of Chase's work. Her strongly narrative work clarifies: What you want exists. Step into it.



Susan Kriegman: Brooches and Containers

Henry Chauncey Conference Center
Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey
March 2–April 30, 1987
by Marjorie Simon

In this latest work Susan Kriegman reveals her debt to Heikki Seppä, using mokume-gane in organic forms scaled to the human body. Form and pattern are carefully balanced so that neither dominates in the 17 brooches and containers presented.

Mounted at eye level, in groups of three, the forms become more complex as the eye travels through the show, with the simpler, subtler, more self-contained forms presented first. The more complex pieces rely less on patterning, making greater use of negative space. The brooches all work as objects and their display in frames emphasizes their visual integrity.

Though carefully designed, the pins appear to be spontaneously executed. The third group reflects an experiment with line in the use of the striped pattern. They are worked more directly into the metal without the intricate planning of larger sculptural pieces. Their humor emerges from organic shapes that are highly suggestive. In these pins lurk the jaunty energy of a torso in motion, dancing ladies' thighs, a flying apron, a can-can dancer. Such soaring forms encourage "flights" of fancy. Less successful were a group of flat pins using tubing as line to open up forms without adding weight.

The containers recall the pure forms for which the artist is better known, and they provide an eloquent counterpoint to the more spontaneous pins. They are visually strong, emotionally powerful. Although the container is a more controlled form, an unexpected element appears as a playful appendage emerging from the top of one voluptuous form. The work quietly engages the viewer, inviting one to contemplate more closely the stripes in an overlapping ruffle against the traditional wood-grain, mokume-gane pattern surrounding it.

Flanked by the more recent brooches, the containers foreshadow the last group of pins, indicating the direction Kriegman may be headed. One looks forward to further exploration of the graphic possibilities of line and space in a less two-dimensional format. Already the body-scale brooches reaffirm the artist's commitment to the dynamic equilibrium of form and pattern.

Top: Debra Chase, *Three Sisters*, aluminum, bronze, acrylic, paper, steel wire, 55 x ½ x 58", 1982; **left:** *Endangered Species* neckpiece, sterling silver, tortoise shell, whale ivory, fresh water pearl, 18 x 6", 1980. Photos: F. Jack Hurley

Opposite page, top: Susan Kriegman, *Container*, copper, kuromido, 3 x 2 x 7"; **center:** *Mokume-gane Brooch*, 2 x 2 x ¼", copper, kuromido, 2 x 2 x ¼"

Jaclyn Davidson: Jewelry

Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, California
May 4–May 30, 1987
by Roberta Floden

Reminiscent of the gargoyles that embellish Gothic cathedrals or those fantastic creatures that dwell in Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Delights*, Jaclyn Davidson's elegant sculptural jewelry does not sit comfortably in a gallery of contemporary art and craft. Her scrupulously detailed, lost-wax cast, sterling-silver and gold figures, hanging from rows of simple, round beads and adorning rings, are more medieval than modern.

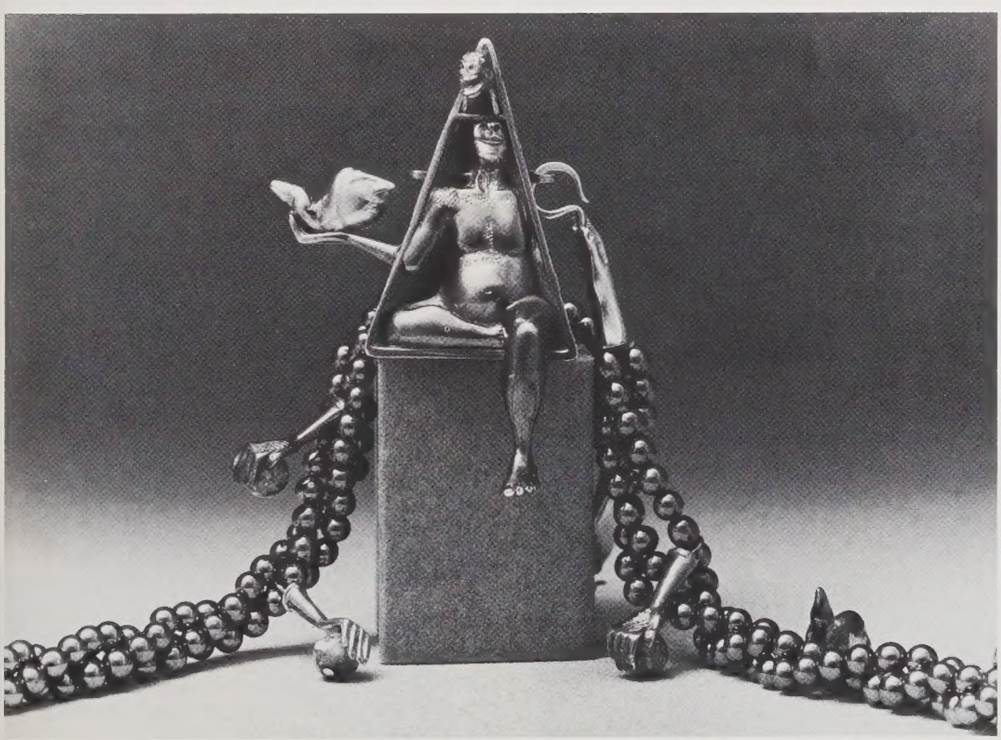
And like medieval grotesqueries, they are informed by disparate juxtapositions: the frightening with the peaceful, the serious with the absurd, the horrible with the beautiful. Such incongruities, along with her idiosyncratic titles and inspirations (that often provide little toward understanding her images, jolt the viewer out of conventional response and invite closer inspection. In her pendant *Super Creeps* are a plethora of dissimilar elements: dismembered arms; a belligerent dog who, according to Davidson, is "keeping evil spirits out like the Fu dogs that guarded Chinese temples"; a naked androgenous person surrounded by "gold anxiety creatures," smiling whimsically because he has his head in a "heal-all" pyramid; all of this suspended from a beautifully designed necklace of sterling silver with gold leaf inlay, cast, chased, engraved and colored. Both compelling and interactive, *Cultural Complex* pendant has a snail-like creature with a female head sitting upon the back of a lizard whose tail forms a cobra.

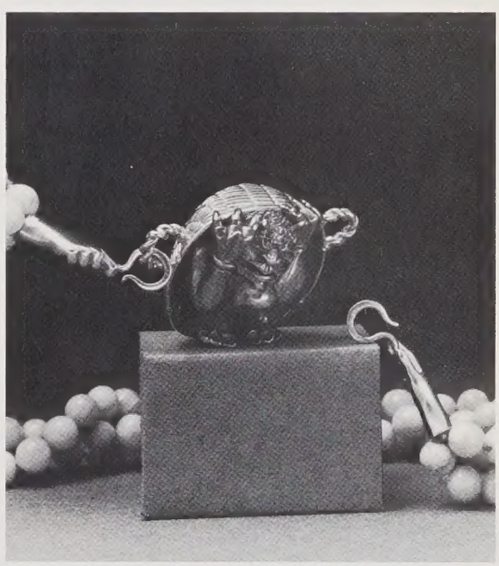
Many of Davidson's pendants depict creatures from fantasy and folklore. In *Hiding Oni*, an exquisitely wrought basket reveals an ugly devil-like creature hiding therein. (Referring to a Japanese custom of throwing parched beans in each room to rout the devil at the end of winter, Davidson says that her "oni is hiding under a basket to escape the beans.") Similar to the figure in Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, the female in Davidson's *Pandora* pendant holds her hands to her ears as the silent sound emitting from her rounded mouth assaults the air. Lines of anxiety stream down her like tears, continuing on the back to become the lines of a scallop shell which—like Pandora's box—opens (with a duck's head handle).

Davidson's rings tell their own concise little stories. *Zebra grazing peacefully with jackals lurking in the background* is "just like my average day," she says. Rings, like *Wolves hunting for the hiding rabbits* and *Cat trying to get birds on other side*, combine the miniature animals with fine enamel work. Often rings are formed from, rather than embellished by, the gold and silver creatures: the legs of *Female dancer with theater masks* curl around the finger.

The surfaces are rarely left plain. Because her pendants have up to five pieces of sculpture soldered together, Davidson uses engraving techniques—naturally and artfully—to cover the soldering seams. She also burnishes in gold foil to enhance and to give texture to her silver pieces. Although her beads are subdued in color, they can call attention to themselves and at times seem to clash rather than balance with the pendants. But the beads are a separate item; often graceful diminutive hands holding hooks that connect the necklaces to the pendants, making the pendants independent and interchangeable.

Despite an evident mastery of metalsmithing, Davidson's techniques are not the focus. Instead, one enters irresistibly into her complex visual and mythological images. Indeed if one *needed* derivations, instead of modern or medieval, perhaps archtypal is the more accurate word. And like those images that swim up from the psychological depths, her jewelry derives its power from the ability to transcend all sense of time or style.





Left: Jaclyn Davidson, *Super Creeps*, sterling silver, gold, cast, colored, engraved, inlayed beads, hematite; **above:** *Hiding Oni*, 14k gold, sterling silver, two-part casting, chased and engraved

Enamels '87

Plum Gallery, Kensington, MD
April 12–May 5, 1987
by Dalene Barry

Putting late-20th-century enameling into perspective is a tough job. Reflecting on an exhibit such as "Enamels '87," you wonder what could be new in a medium that has seduced artists, swordsmen, dilettantes and curators for 25-odd centuries. Not a lot was "new" in this exhibition, but most of the 49 artists represented offered the finest workmanship available in enameled jewelry, sculptural works and wall pieces. A survey of the award-winning works (five Jurors' Awards of Merit and one Special Newcomer Award) might give an overview of what some of North America's top enamelists are doing today.

A rhomboid brooch by Celia Braswell of Bethesda, Maryland, in muted tones of gray with blushes of warm tans, was a free-form study of opaque and transparent enamel. A light appeared to glow from within, through depths of shadowy forms. Achieving an almost marblelike mingling of colors, Braswell's domed piece seemed cut from another source. The surface was interspersed with small bits of matter, as if embedded with petrified leaves, stones and small fossil forms. Her mastery of abstract painting technique allowed her to explore fusions of color in multiple layers, utilizing the unique blending qualities of enamel.

The exquisite craftsmanship evident in James Carter's two brooches *Pipedreams I and II*, brought this Carbondale, Illinois jeweler to the top of the show for metalsmithing ability. Enamel on these brooches served as a decorative medium. Tiny bursts of color, carefully contained by gold cloisonné wires, highlighted deep blue and black enameled cylinders, each curved upward to support a golden finial. Bangles dangled and beads sparkled from adjacent arms, conjuring up images of a golden fancy, reminiscent of a sultan's lair.

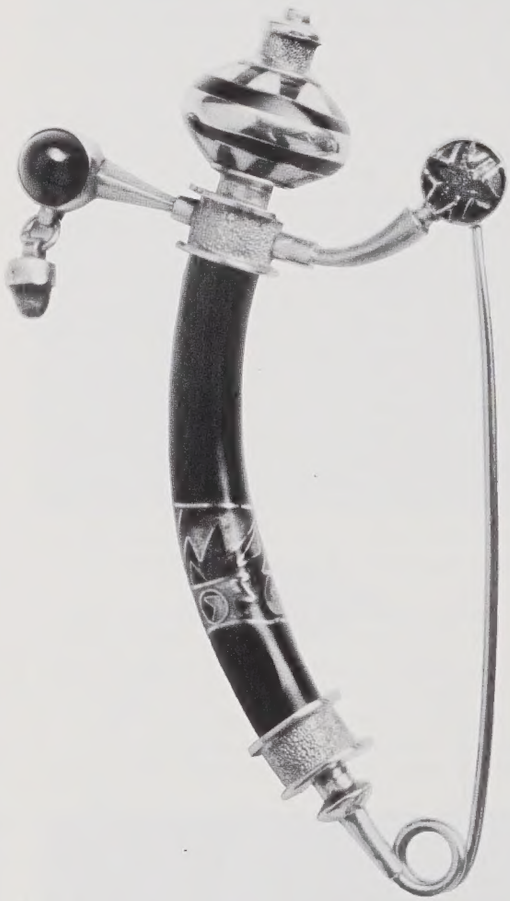
Peggy Hitchcock played a visual game with her audience in *Raining Frogs*. Frogs, fish, a cat and background linear patterns all were juxtaposed to one another to bring the viewer forward for a better look, then back away for perspective, then closer again, head tilted to break the code. Then, there was the question of the enamel itself. This Seattle enamelist's technical ability and interweaving of other media in her designs made her the master of her tools. Hitchcock used enamel, as she did paint, wood, metal and photography, not for its own inherent beauty, but as a complementary medium, subservient to her overall mastery of design.

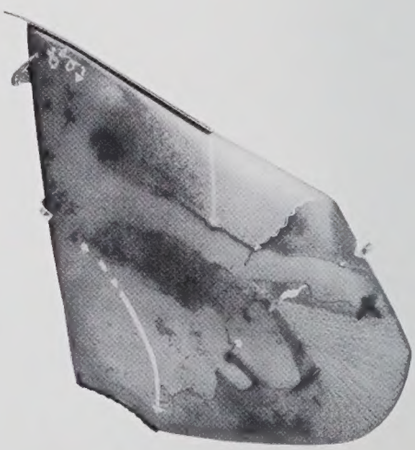
Belle and Roger Kuhn's enameled brooches were pure and elegant in form, but far from simple in their thoughtful execution. Their two-inch-square brooch was a quiet study of color and depth. Subtly blended tones of transparent blues formed a background grid for diagonal stripes in blues and pinks. The stripes floated over the transparent background, separated visually by a deep purple, opaque shape. A free-floating, sterling frame anchored the enamel, secured by tiny silver bars echoing sections within the enameled grid. This Bethesda, Maryland couple has long been known for their fundamental approach to enamel and design, exploring the basics of what enamel can do and how the result can be enhanced by a rectilinear, perfectly complementary setting. A special bonus—their brooches are equally handsome on women and men.

Janet Marsano's *Blue Fingers*, a free-standing table piece of brass and plexiglass, supported a removable enameled brooch, offering the viewer a whimsical hands-on opportunity. Innovative design was a strong point in this Columbus, Ohio enamelist's work. A strip of brass across the lower portion of the table piece featured cut-out shapes of hands, which were folded back flush with the plexi surface. This simple trick made the positive and negative spaces work double duty, hinting at a moment's suspension in lively animation. The enameled brooch repeated the theme of upheld hands, reaching for the stars, their own blue fingers, perhaps a velvet glove? It was anyone's guess—much to everyone's delight.

Betsy Crump's series of *New Mexico Mourning Pins* were awarded a special prize, sponsored by the Northern California Enamel Guild, for exceptional work by an enamelist who had not previously won a national award. The three diminutive brooches were architectural in scope, suggesting horizons beyond the limitations of physical size. Black enamel, in both glossy and etched finishes, was set against gold frameworks in simple, elegantly streamlined shapes. These highly refined pieces from Norman, Oklahoma, gave enamel a sophisticated design theme rarely achieved in this seductive color medium.

"Enamels '87" jurors gave honorable mention to Christina Gibson-Sears, Santee, California; Kathryn Regier Gough, Huntington, New York; Alison Howard-Levy, New York City; and Harry Weiss, Bethesda, Maryland.





Far left: Peggy Hitchock, *Raining Frogs* wall piece, enamel on copper, acrylic, paper, wood, 22½ x 22"; **top left:** James Carter, *Pipedream* brooch, enamel, gold, 1¼ x 3½"; **left:** Janet Marsano, *Blue Fingers* table piece with brooch, enamel on copper, sterling silver, brass, plexiglass, paint, 9 x 7" table, 3 x 2" brooch; **above:** Celia Braswell, *Brooch,* enamel on copper, silver and gold foil, sterling silver, 2 x 2¼"

Richard Helzer Exhibition

Flossie Martin Gallery
Radford University, Radford, VA
February 6–22, 1987
by C. James Meyer

Radford University recently mounted a one-man exhibition of Montana artist Richard Helzer's work. The exhibition was comprised of 10 wall panels with a piece or multiple pieces of jewelry attached and four free-standing sculptures.

The wall pieces, which were arranged in four separate groups, consisted of framed plexiglass with one or more pieces of jewelry attached, along with drawings on the plexiglass that related to the imagery of the jewelry and/or its construction. There was a free use of materials; the neckpieces were simple hoops of anodized tantalum with a fabricated silver closure; suspended on a hoop were pendant forms, small twigs of wood, twigs reproduced in metal, found pebbles with holes drilled in them, metal constructions, etc. . . one panel that I felt was particularly strong, contained a series of gestural images drawn in colored pencil. Centered in the frame was a brooch, a hard-edged fabricated bronze and silver form that contained inset slices of prismacolor pencils with their painted edges and central dot of color.

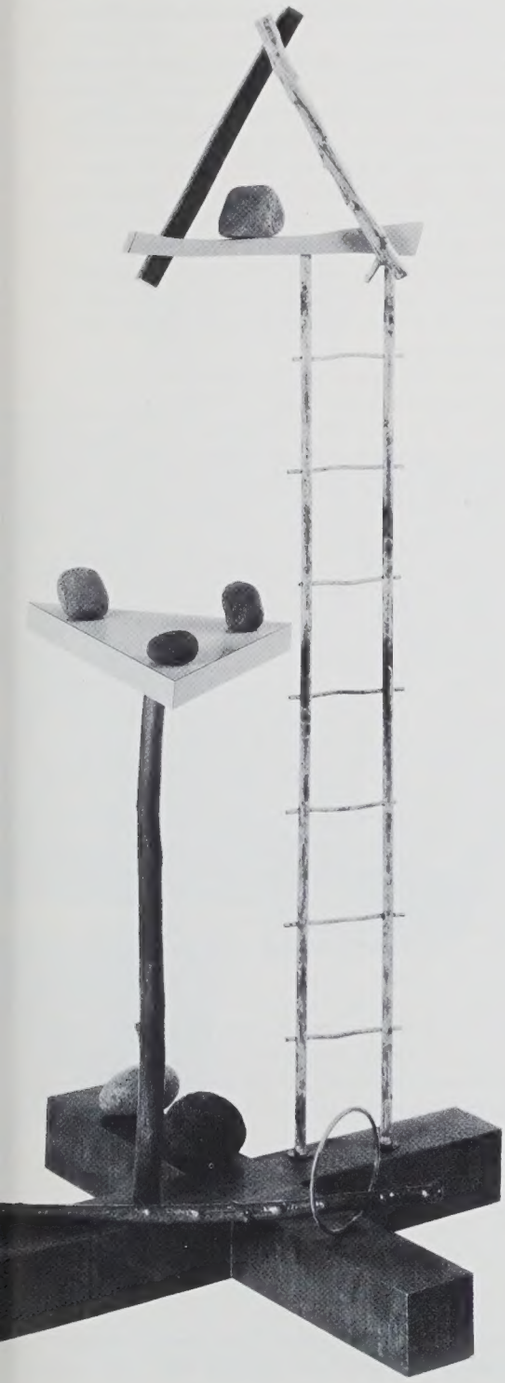
In his statement that accompanied the exhibition Helzer states, "I no longer feel bound to a "tour de force" of complex constructions or workmanship. Instead, I am concentrating on. . . spontaneity and directness. Among my interests are: the image as symbol, drawing in the third dimension, and the use of nonprecious materials. . ." Much of this was accomplished. The objects were refreshingly crafted. Appropriately, the intent was not to dazzle with technical skill, yet the objects were made with integrity.

The jewelry raised important questions. I found the show to be very eclectic in the use of imagery and presentation. Claus Bury certainly isn't the only one to have taken jewelry out of the dresser drawer and put it on the wall, but he did it a long time ago and did it so well that it is difficult for an artist to do the same and not have that strong reference. (I feel that only the recent Jamie Bennett constructions with enameled objects have taken the idea a step further).

The forms were also eclectic. The use of multiple, interchangeable forms on the neckring remind one of Hermann Junger's early 1980s work. The dimensioned-parallelogram brooch is precedented by a mid-70s Bury piece. Clouds and lightening bolts are to be found as recurrent symbols. Are they still valid 15 years later? Am I too demanding in wanting to see less generic imagery? The spontaneity that Helzer is searching for exists only on the surface. It ends up like eating day-old bread, nutritious but a little stale.

The jewelry/wall pieces raise the question of wearabilty. Here the mode of presentation has definite pros and cons. To the viewer, having the objects right there, not once removed by a sheet of glass, gives the objects a real presence. The use of drawing along with object has both positive and negative effects. Again, I quote from the artist's statement: "It is my hope that the drawing and the jewelry are in harmony. . . (giving) the viewer sufficient information to understand the roots of each object." In the case of imagery development and, when used, color palette, I found the drawing supportive of the object. However, I found little technical notations very distracting. As stated earlier, the objects were not meant to be technical *tours de force*. As a jeweler these drawings gave me no special insights that weren't obvious from looking at the piece. Is it important to a nonjeweler how a silver catch is attached to a piece of tantalum? Finally, the jewelry was wired to the wall piece from the back. While I acknowledge this necessity for security reasons, the restricted access combined with the fact that placing jewelry on a wall in a frame calls out, "Hey, I'm art, look at me," gave one the sense that the artist never intended that the objects be worn. It became a bit pretentious. I thought we had gotten over our paranoia about being "artists."

Not surprisingly, the sculptures showed similar strengths and weaknesses as the jewelry. Again I found them eclectic, with the strongest influence being the work of H.C. Westermann. In some ways, I found them overly crafted. The use of formica offered a distracting edge. The substitution of a painted surface might have had more personality. I enjoyed the objects sheathed in sheet lead. The recognizable stick that takes on a different personality being dark gray and metallic, combined with rocks, was successfully juxtaposed to rectilinear colored forms. Helzer states "each piece in this show attempts to project the illusion of a mysterious event or place." However, it is as if a known formula for success was followed. As with the jewelry, I didn't get a sense of risks being taken.



Left: *Rock Blaze,* sheet lead, copper, stone, wood, formica, 64 x 32 x 23", **right:** *Lightning House,* sheet lead, copper, stone, formica, 62 x 32 x 32", 1986

Anne Krohn Graham: New Age Totems

Elaine Pottery Gallery, San Francisco, CA
April 21-May 23, 1987
by Carrie Adell

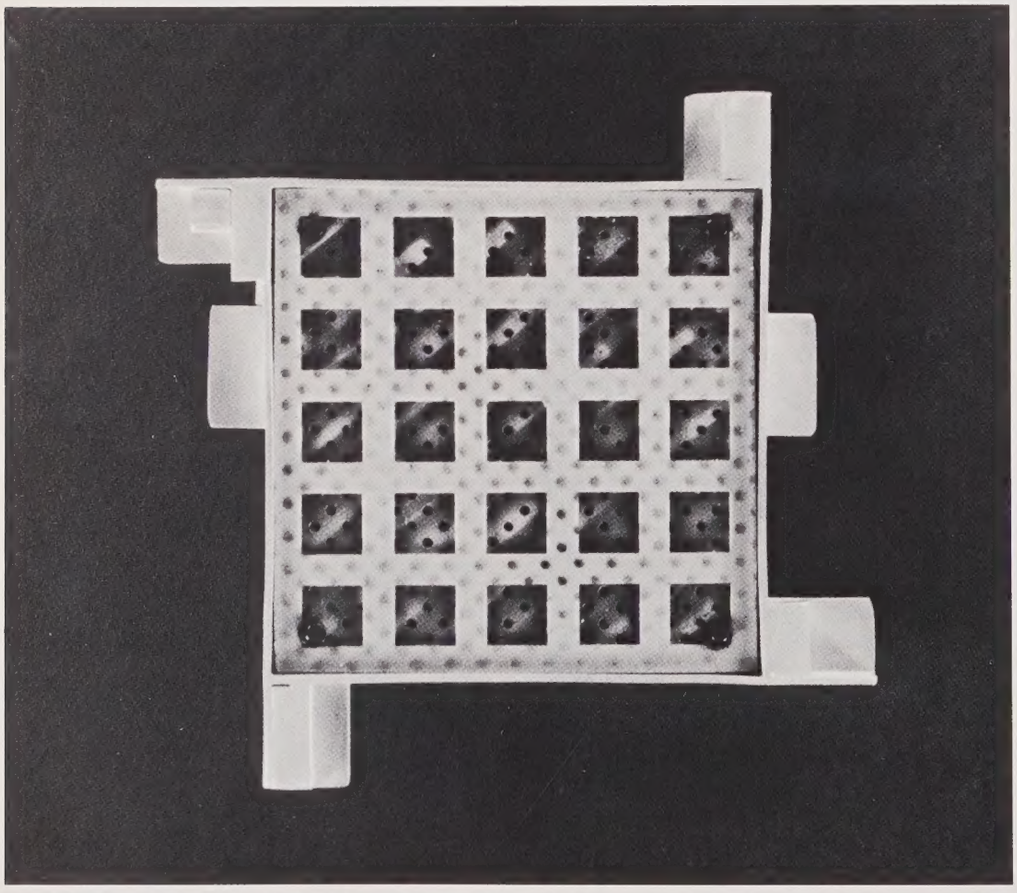
In a statement on this exhibit, the artist declares that she was inspired by architectural structures and patterns found in urban spaces, such as lattices, grids, gratings, windows and fences.

The works themselves, 60 pieces of anodized aluminum jewelry, were grouped into three different yet visually related collections. Most visible and dramatic were the pectorals, cuffs and earrings, all of which were constructed in bread planes of gently embossed geometrics, overlayed and accented with anodized areas of color. Graham here extends concepts developed for a show at The Worcester Craft Center in October, 1985 (see *Metalsmith* Summer 1986, pp. 58-59). Now the surfaces are further elaborated, layer upon layer. Echoes of patterns on the broad, embossed surfaces appear in miniature, in photoetched and anodized areas of embellishment. Her statements are even bolder now.

A second grouping, predominantly brooches and pendants of perforated patterns and layered lattices, were small (about 2½ x 2½"), more intimate compositions, intriguing in their overlay of complex color, a counterpoint to the cutout areas. Brooches and pendants were each provided with their own appropriately signed and colored, wall plaque environment, creating dimensional designs, in the manner of Mondrian. The brooches themselves were rectangular, each framed in a field of sterling silver sheets. These rigid armatures were finished in a soft sandblasted surface, enfolding and connecting three to six layers of anodized perforated patterns, reiterating the rhythmic regularity of the perforations in graduated tones of contrasting colors. The "frames" and layers are cold-joined with tiny decorative nuts, bolts, rivets. Different pierced and anodized patterns appear on the flip sides of all the layered brooches. They can be suspended, either side out, on a choice of neckpiece structures called *Torii*. These architectural lattices are of softly finished aluminum tubing, carefully arranged perpendiculars, the tips of which terminate in caps and finials of mechanical fitting. One open-ended horizontal tube receives the pin-stem of any of the brooches interchangeably, converting it to a pendant.

Body sculptures, exhibited in four clusters or architectural arrangements, made up the third visual grouping. The calfpiece was constructed of heavy aluminum rod, bent in a series of perpendiculars, which could be wrapped around and rested upon the wearer's calf in a choice of positions. Ankle, arm and wrist were similarly provided for, in a finer gauge of aluminum rod jewelry, festooned with fixed and mobile bands and rings, and with the subtlest of anodized colors.

Graham treats aluminum with the respect usually reserved for precious metals. She has reached her goal "to achieve a dye-colored surface that catches ambient light to create a vibrant interaction, which is perceived as an iridescent transparent surface layer." It's the most sensitive and subtlest use of color I've seen on aluminum.



Ann Krohn Graham, *Cosmic Shower* brooch, sterling silver, anodized aluminum, 2½ x 2½", 1987

William Harper

March 9-April 4, 1987
Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, CA
by Carrie Adell

William Harper is a self-proclaimed "Eclectic-Man." He draws his subject matter, symbols and imagery from myths and religions. He borrows stylistically from past cultures. His jewelry communicates the feel of the ancient, of something dug up out of the past; yet, it speaks simultaneously in a contemporary idiom. Harper wants to jolt the viewer by combining unexpected materials and techniques and by the juxtaposition of content both sacred and profane.

How then is the viewer jolted? Perhaps the jolt comes from discovering that some of the fragmented elements in Harper's elegant designs are of common origin (bike reflector bits in textured red plastic), materials seemingly inconsistent with the gold, gemstones and especially the opulent surfaces of cloisonné enamel.

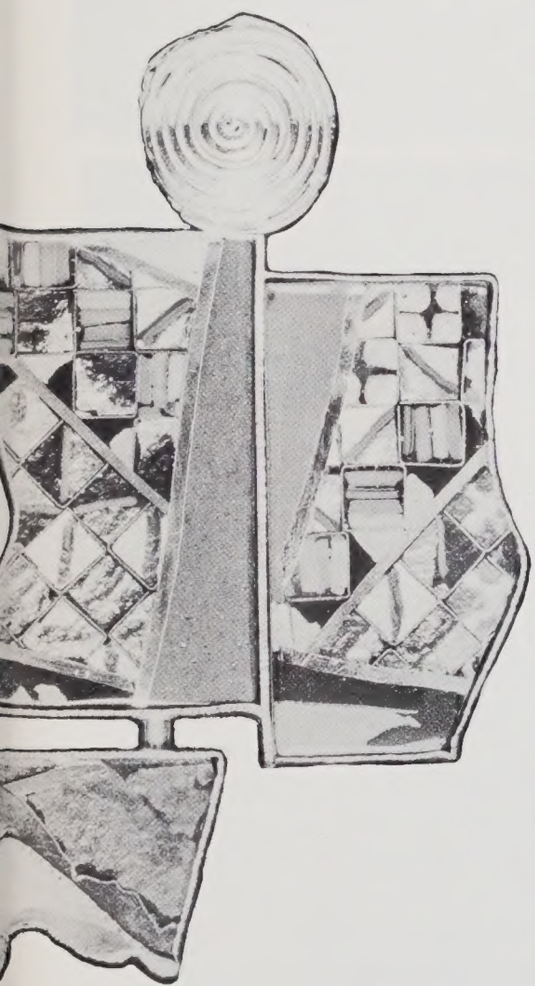
It is in these enameled areas that Harper celebrates his art. Here, the viewer glimpses Harper's commitment to doing and making, his skill and dedication to delicate and time-consuming processes. The echos of cloisonné enamel areas found in the bits of bike reflectors gives us an indication of Harper's attitude towards "preciousness" and its attendant associations. He reminds us that Western contemporary values stand side-by-side with those of other places, people and circumstances.

Does the viewer get a feast of visual and conceptual complexity? I would say yes, and then some. The most recent work in this exhibit, a series of wizard's wand brooches, demonstrates visual power and strength beyond any supernatural magic with which they might be invested. Shown as vertical forms, they are mostly long brooches (up to seven inches), reassembled fragments, deeply framed, heavily enriched with cloisonné enamels, textured, offset bezels and a variety of metals and other materials. These images are less referential than found in earlier series, some of which were also shown, where masks, skulls, fetishes recall the iconography of primitive cultures, somewhat caricatured.

Harper's titles lead the viewer to connections and associations that the images alone do not communicate. They enrich the experience of the works by triggering our strong feelings and allusions to religion, morality, status or whatever is important to us about these subjects. Harper is telling us, perhaps, about the homogenized nature of the world we now live in, where we have access to the myths, histories, rituals and symbols of all cultural heritages, ours for the taking, although not always in the spirit in which they were created.

Yet, what happens to these enriching experiences of the jewelry when a piece comes out of the case and onto the wearer? Away from the antiseptic environs of the showcase. the piece is transformed by its new environment, a human being, herself a walking warehouse of visual and emotional associations, and by the event of wearing, itself charged with content that brings the wearer and viewer together. The title may tell how cultured, or clever, or well traveled the maker is, but the work tells more about the maker as an artist and a human being.

The work stands for itself, and for its process of creation. It alone tells about the balance of line, form, color, texture chosen for use by this artist at this particular time in this particular piece. It tells that the artist loves color and sings with color. It tells that the artist values the spontaneity of his metalworking processes over more "refined" techniques, that primitive is valued over polished, that fragments are all the story he wants to tell, that mystery is important and that his images inherently embody greater power than their titles.



William Harper, *The Sorcerer's Quilt,* gold, enamel, 1986

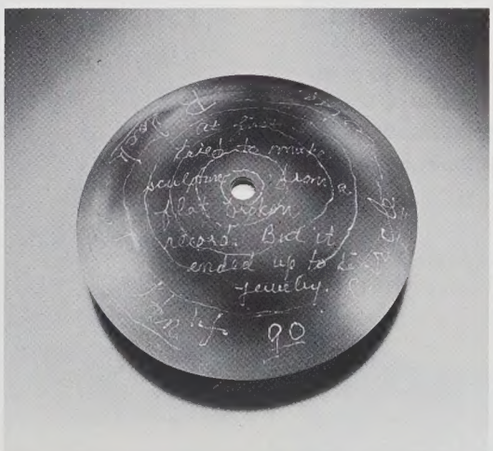
Lisa Gralnick

VO Galerie, Washington D.C.
May 21-June 18, 1987
by Nicholas Ward

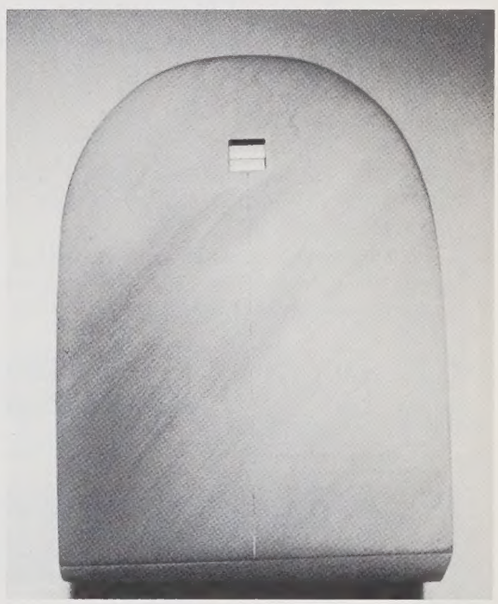
All the work produced for this show is fabricated from black acrylic sheet, 1/16" in thickness, bent, glued and worked to a satin smooth finish. The craftsmanship is such that the seams joining the various hollow sections of each piece are barely perceptible. On first sight, the individual works appear to be either solid castings or carved from material such as ebony. It is a surprise to handle one of them to discover the actual lightness that belies the density and visual weight of its material. Formally, the works consist of fairly regular geometric solids such as discs, cylinders, triangles, cubic and rectangular shapes that in some cases are notched, divided or cleaved with fins and protrusions. Because of their proportional relationship, and the uniform finish that displays no handwork, these objects have an industrial, even mechanical look that gives them a somewhat impersonal, yet cool, elegant quality.

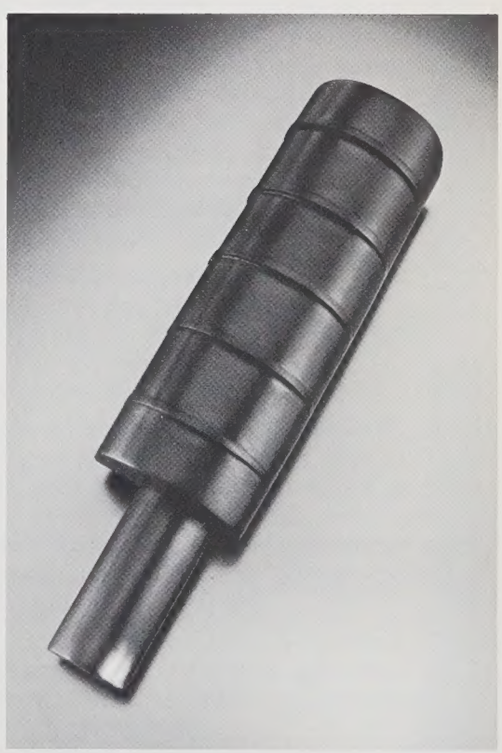
Although the pieces are similar both in terms of materials and techniques, Gralnick's work falls into clearly defined thematic groups. There are ones recalling architectural motifs, houses, obelisks or simple monuments. There is a cluster of small discuslike brooches with their form changed either by segmented cuts or altered with geometric additions. By contrast, other brooches have long, narrow, tapering bodies that resemble projectiles with fins. One piece that stands out, partly because it is the largest object in the show, resembles the upturned keel of a boat or the top half of a submarine hull with its contours flowing to two points on either end.

Perhaps the most enigmatic group of works are recent ones that have written inscriptions roughly scratched into their surfaces. These appear to outline the artist's thoughts concerning their inception and evolution. One example reads, "Black shouldn't go circle wise. I tried to make sculpture from a flat broken record but it ended up to be jewelry." An apparent concern seems to be how to treat an object's surface in a meaningful way while eschewing decorative two-dimensional effects. This particular piece also has a recessed center containing inlaid gold. The combinations are starkly contrasted and quite sophisticated in execution.



Overall, Gralnick appears to find a sinister fascination in the world of streamlined forms that we now take for granted, and perhaps we would rather not be reminded of some of them because of their ultimate purposes. Machines, missiles, planes, ships are evident as fundamental sources of inspiration. She is obviously uncomfortable with the preciousness of traditional jewelry, wishing to infuse her work with a significance beyond its role as adornment. These wearable sculptures are a personal distillation of many forms that can embody universal menace or unease. She approaches these private feelings in a positive manner by transforming them into beautiful objects.





Top: Lisa Gralnick, *Brooch,* hollow construction in acrylic; **above:** *Brooch,* hollow construction in acrylic, 6 x 1½ x 1¼", 1987; **left:** *Brooch,* hollow construction in acrylic with gold foil, 3" d., 1987. Photos: Ralph Gabriner

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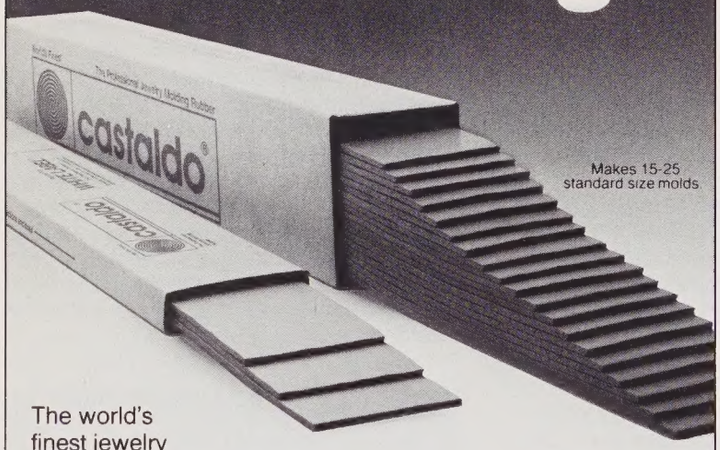

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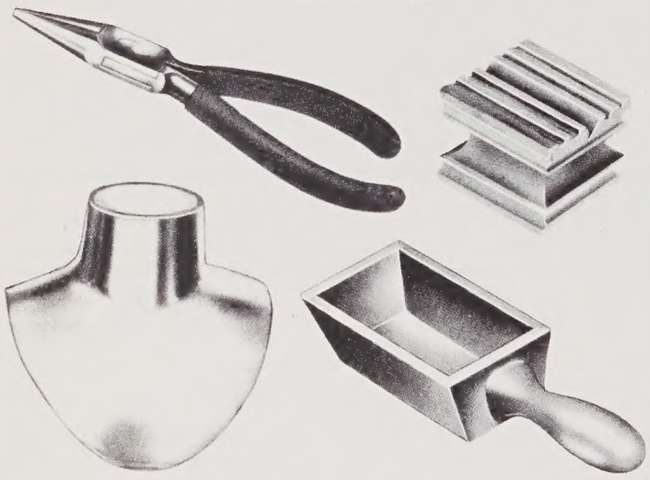

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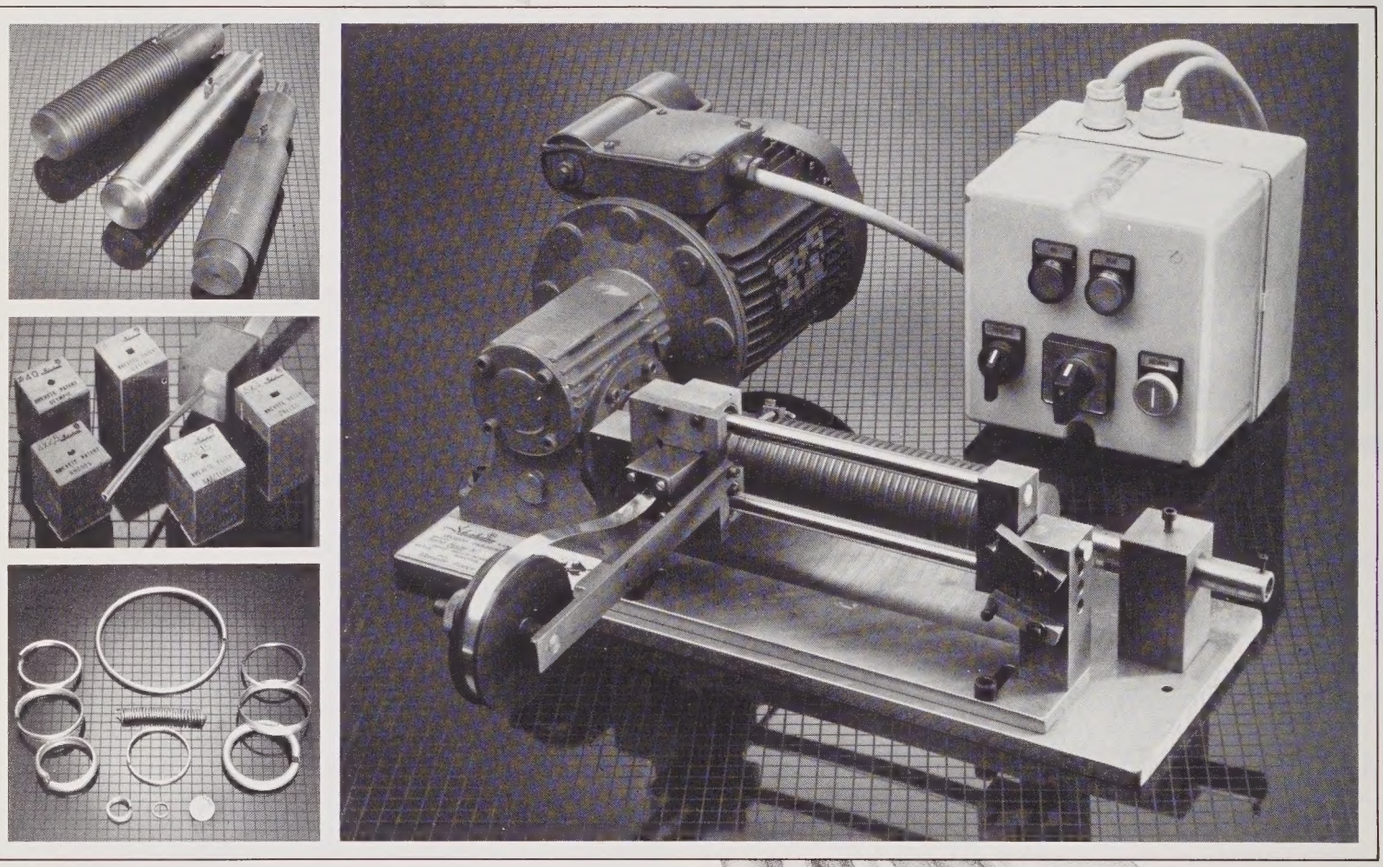

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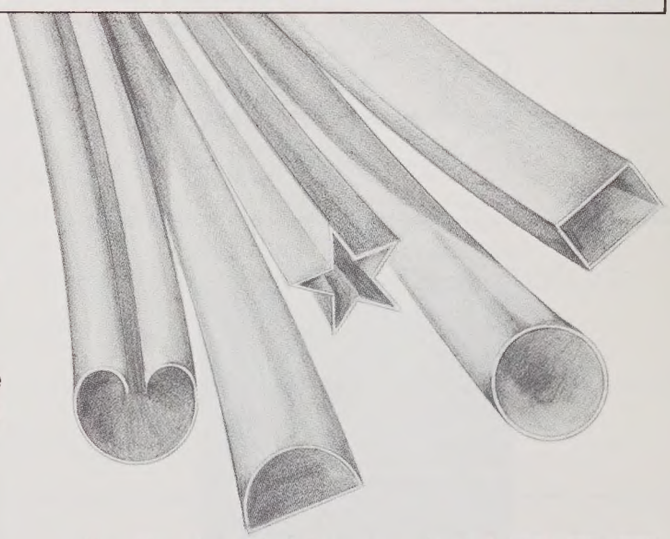

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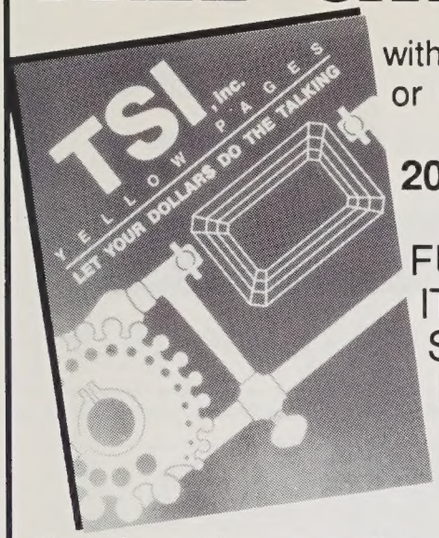

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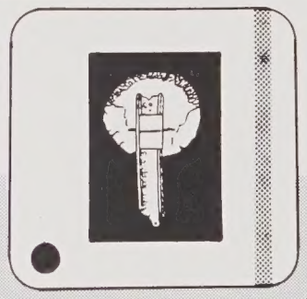

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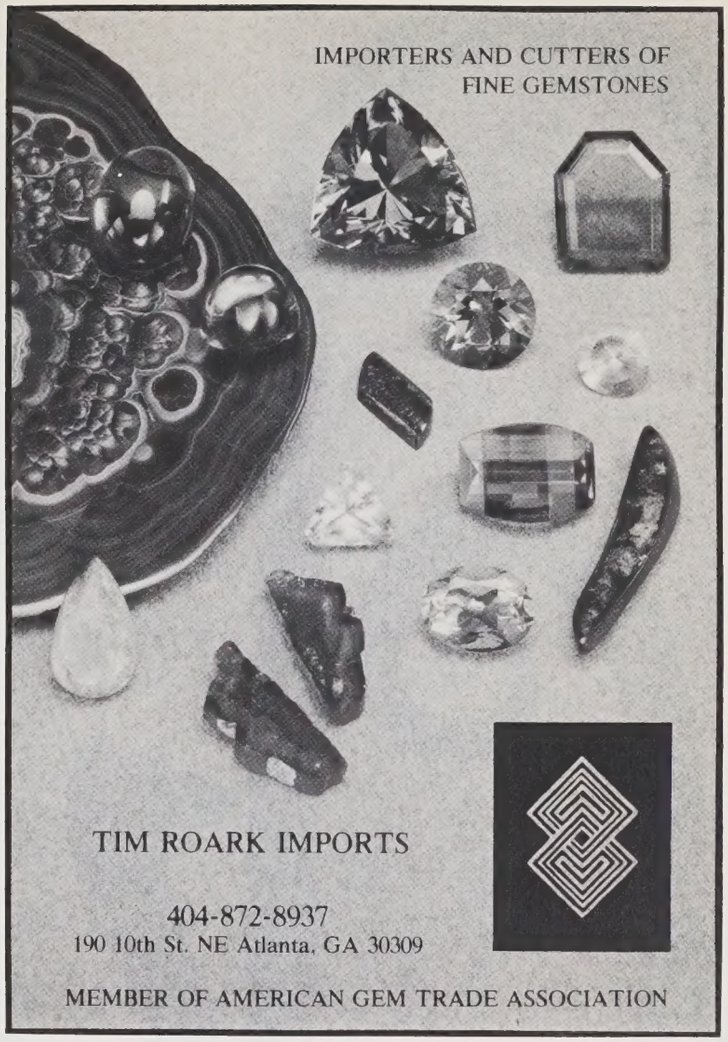

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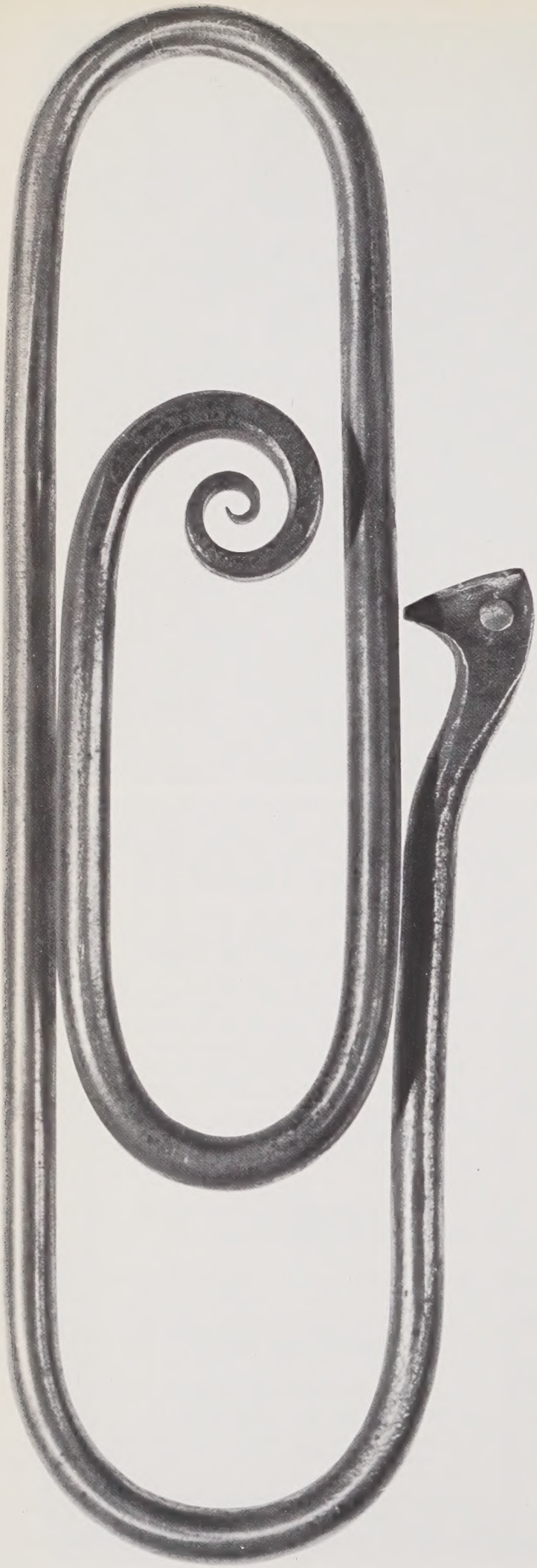

Each year in mid-March, the Metal Museum must submit an allocation request to the Memphis Arts Council for funding for the next fiscal year. This task usually requires the full-time attention of three staff members for several weeks. Multiple copies of the completed request, often consist of as many as 60 pages per copy, and have weighted in excess of a pound each.

John Medwedeff, or "Duff," as he was named shortly after his arrival here, served as apprentice, night watchman, desk attendant, exhibit technician and general maintenance man for three years while pursuing undergraduate studies at the Memphis College of Art and Memphis State University. While Duff is a gifted designer-smith, he has never been noted for his mathematical abilities. When he wandered into the smoke-filled office amidst the whir of calculators and asked if there were anything he might do to help, Museum Director Jim Wallace sent him to the shop to make a paperclip for our nearly complete request. Duff complied, and a tradition was born.

Duff, now a graduate student in metals at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, claims he begins to dream about paperclips in January, and, despite his other pursuits, always manages to have a paperclip in our hands by the date the Council's allocation request is due. The growing collection of FY paperclips belongs to the Memphis Arts Council, and is proudly displayed on the office wall of Vice-President, Barbara Feibelman.

If you are a metalsmith, you might want to give this attention-getting ploy a chance the next time you apply for a grant. Thanks, Duff.

—Judy Nichols Coomber
Assistant Director
National Ornamental Metal
Museum, Memphis, TN

John Davis Medwedeff, *Fy 87=88 Paperclip*, forged bronze. Collection: Memphis Arts Council, Memphis, TN.
Left: *FY 85=86 Paperclip*, forged mild steel, brass, 1985
Photos: F. Jack Hurley

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The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary gold- and silversmithing. SNAG serves as a forum for the free exchange of ideas in the field.

Technical information, esthetic and educational issues, and other topics of interest to the practitioner and teacher of contemporary metalwork are disseminated by SNAG publications and conferences. Professionals and students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts will all find SNAG interesting and useful. From pure sculpture to production jewelry, SNAG offers information on the entire range of the exciting field of metalsmithing.

SERVICES

Each year, SNAG conducts a conference that attracts jewelers and silversmiths from all over the world. Major figures in the field speak on a multitude of topics. Each conference is held in a different location to allow the widest audience possible access to these lively and stimulating gatherings.

Periodically, SNAG sponsors major exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. In the past, SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and the Phoenix Museum of Art. A special exhibition of work by Distinguished Members traveled to major museums in Europe in 1979.

The Society operates a book ordering service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

SNAG also operates a slide library and rental service, which contains the portfolios of Distinguished Members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent or purchase slices at minimal cost.

PUBLICATIONS

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Prominent jewelers and designers, silversmiths, blacksmiths and sculptors are featured in full-length articles. Process and technique are explored in essays on design and production, materials and equipment. Regular columns by leading authorities discuss the latest gallery shows, newest books and current museum exhibitions.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, workshops, conferences and job opportunities from all across the U.S. and Canada.

MEMBERSHIP

SNAG offers several types of memberships, each tailored to a specific level of involvement in the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

General Membership is open to everyone and includes subscriptions to *Metalsmith* and the SNAG Newsletter, reduced conference fees, access to all of SNAG's services and full voting privileges.

Distinguished Membership is a special juried category, which is conferred upon members who demonstrate outstanding contribution to the field. Special exhibitions and other privileges are available to these members. This category of membership includes all publications and other advantages described above.

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Institutional Membership is available for nonprofit organizations like schools and libraries. Institutions receive four issues of *Metalsmith* magazine per year.

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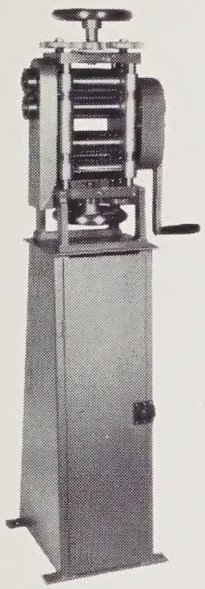

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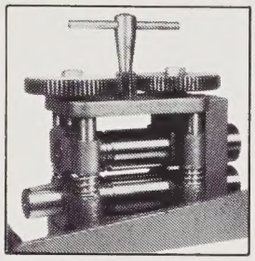

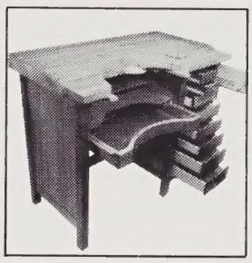

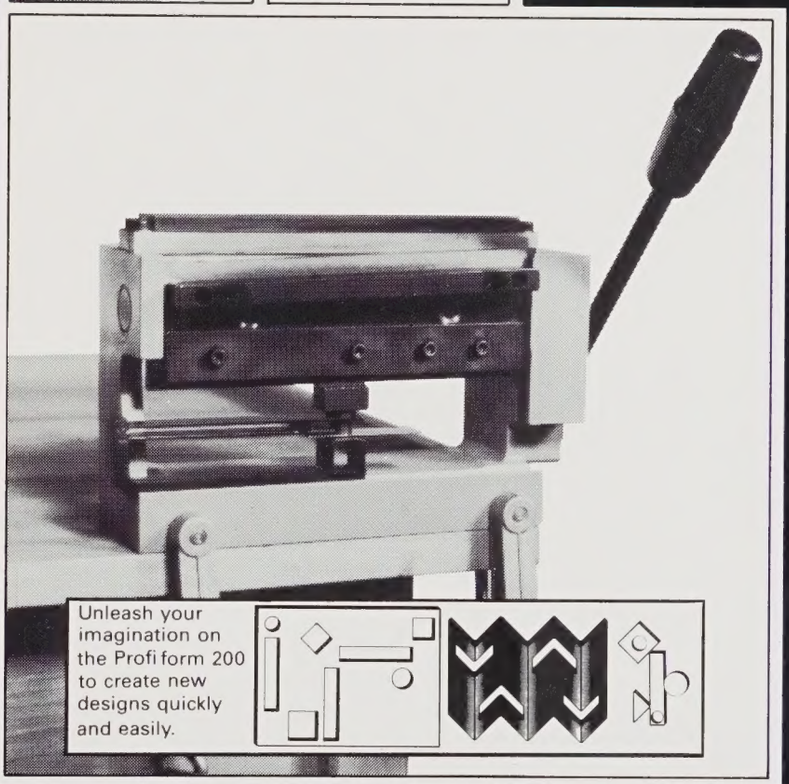

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